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Marxism Today

EDITORIAL COMMENTS

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DAVID CRAIG — WHERE DOES LITERATURE END?

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Editorial Comments

THE economic situation and how to deal with it still occupies the centre of the stage in British politics. It is now becoming clear that the Government's policy—particularly its Incomes Policy—had no relevance to the actual economic situation which existed when it took office.

In its September issue the *London and Cambridge Economic Bulletin* says:

> "The brave talk about repudiating the 'stop-go' policy was evidently not based on any ideas about how it could be avoided—except possibly the hope that the Government's long-run measures would have taken effect before the next occasion for 'stop' arose. This hope was doomed to failure *because of the particular stage of the cycle at which the Government took office.*"

What a reflection on the galaxy of academic economists who were advising the Government, whose policy took no account of the trade cycle.

The Government took office at the height of a boom, when prices were rising at a rate of 5 per cent per annum, and when profits were rising at a rate of around 20 per cent per annum. Yet both in its autumn budget (petrol tax) and in its April budget (taxes on drink and tobacco) it applied measures which raised the cost of living still further.

It then asked the unions to keep wage and earnings increases within a framework of $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent per annum—in short it asked them to allow prices to race on ahead of wages for the time being. When the unions refused to do this the Government threatened them with "early warning systems", and further measures of compulsion. Not monopoly capitalism, not the long years of imperialist policy since 1945 supported by Tory and Labour governments alike, but the trade unions are being put in the centre of the stage as the villains who are undermining the British economy—and by a Labour Government, too.

Now It's Re-deployment

Mr. Harold Wilson has been saying that the Government measures to slow down the economy are aiming not at unemployment but at re-deployment. This is the silliest sophistry. The Government has no machinery for re-deploying a man from one industry to another without him being out of a job. The process is for the man to be rendered unemployed as a preliminary to his being re-deployed and he can remain unemployed for months, while waiting for a job.

Another point made by the *London and Cambridge Economic Bulletin* is that some of the Government measures are aimed not to remove any weakness of the British economy but to impress foreign bankers.

> "Insofar as the present pressure on sterling is due to lack of confidence, rather than to the behaviour of the current balance, the relevance of the Government's recent deflationary measures is purely psychological. These measures can be criticised on the same ground as were the measures of 1961, that they are not relevant to the problems they are designed to solve, *except insofar as opinion, especially foreign opinion, irrationally holds them to be so.* If persisted in they will presumably make 1966 a year of low activity like 1962."

It is imperialist policy, continued by all governments throughout this century, that has rendered the economy so vulnerable to foreign speculation. Until this policy is attacked and swept aside every government, but particularly every Labour government, will be contained in an economic and political straitjacket.

T.U.C. and Automation

The Trades Union Congress General Council has at last got round to reviewing the increase in automation in this country and making suggestions with regard to what should be done.

We hope that by the 1966 Congress the affiliated unions will get round to challenging the statement about the relation of an extension of public ownership, and, of course, planning. Says the document:

> "The T.U.C. report on trade unions and automation in 1956 refers to fears that automation would intensify monopolistic tendencies in the private sector in industry and to the view that the only way to control automation adequately was to extend the public ownership of industry. . . . Decisions about possible action to limit monopolistic tendencies in the private sector and to extend public ownership ought to be taken in the light of all the factors concerned. It is inappropriate therefore to deal with the issues solely in the context of technological change. . . . Public ownership in itself will not solve the problems posed by technological change."

This is a lovely specimen of T.U.C. waffle. It is not a question of public ownership "in itself" being most effective in controlling automation but public ownership as the basis of a genuine plan.

The T.U.C. deliberately ignores the fact that one of the effects of automation is the installation of more capital equipment per worker employed, and therefore more profit per worker employed. It talks as if automation means an increase in national income which will be more or less equitably shared.

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On the contrary, it means an enormous increase in profits relative to wages.

That is why the powerful all-round development of automation cannot be controlled by the unions alone. The unions need to be reinforced by a strong government under working-class influence, to compel automation to serve the people. The more one considers the problems raised by automation, the more one sees the need for social and economic planning based on extended nationalisation and real controls.

If the T.U.C. looked at the U.S.A. it would discover that despite an unprecedented boom, with all Keynesian measures in operation, the country where automation has had the widest application has 4,300,000 unemployed and is finding, at the height of the boom, the utmost difficulty in reducing that number.

The British unions should take note of this and not let the T.U.C. get away with its present negative attitude.

West German Imperialism Today

Much careful research has been carried out in recent years by German Marxists on one or another aspect of state monopoly capitalism and its growth in Western Germany. They began, naturally enough, to feel the need for some more comprehensive, co-ordinated study, bringing together the work of previous researches, and presenting a composite picture of the phenomenon as a whole.

Such a work of synthesis was undertaken by a group of lecturers and research workers at the Berlin Institute of Social Sciences (which works under the auspices of the Central Committee of the Socialist Unity Party) and has now been published under the title *Imperialism Today: State Monopoly Capitalism in West Germany*.[1]

Our readers may be interested in the general approach and lay-out of this monumental study. It begins with a short historical sketch of the growth of monopoly and state monopoly capitalism in Germany, from the rudiments at the end of last century right into the 1960s. There follows a fairly detailed examination of the contemporary machinery of state in West Germany—economic, political, military, ideological. Two chapters then treat the economic methods of state monopoly capitalism, the policies of taxation, subsidies, credit, attempts at and methods of "regulation" of the economy, at "planning", the character of successive economic crises.

The authors study the militarisation of the economy and its effects, the role of the West German state and monopolies in the European Common Market, and the bourgeois economic theories that prevail in West Germany today. They conclude with a study of the methods and extent of exploitation of the working people and with some theoretical observations on the general nature and operation of state monopoly capitalism. The book has a wealth of tables and diagrams illustrating the class structure of Western Germany, rise of the monopolies, division of income, arms expenditure, etc.

It is, of course, a pity that such a study, of what is now the second strongest capitalist country in the world, should not be available in English. We would welcome its publication despite the inevitably restricted readership in this country, and express the hope that, perhaps, a shortened version could be made available for the English-speaking reader.

Oskar Lange and Michal Kalecki

Two imposing volumes of essays in honour of Professors Oskar Lange and Michal Kalecki respectively have just appeared in English (mostly) from P.W.N., the Polish Scientific Publishers. They are entitled *On Political Economy and Econometrics*, a volume of nearly 700 pages, and *Problems of Economic Dynamics and Planning*, of nearly 500 pages; and are being handled in this country by the Pergamon Press. Among the names to be found in one or other volume (or in both) are: Professors Joan Robinson (who writes on "Kalecki and Keynes") and Richard Stone, Sir Roy Harrod, John Eaton and Maurice Dobb from this country; the late Paul Baran and Paul Sweezy and L. R. Klein and G. Tintner from U.S.A.; Professor Ragnar Frisch of Norway; Professors Mahalanobis and A. K. Sen from India; Drs. T. Prager, J. Steindl, K. Rothschild and E. März from Austria. Among contributors from the socialist countries there are familiar names like Brus and Laski, Nemchinov, Boiarski, Konius, P. P. Maslov and Kornai, as well as Kalecki and Lange themselves writing each in the volume devoted to the other. The subjects covered are too numerous and varied to enumerate; but, despite their price, both volumes deserve to be in all student libraries and in the public libraries at least of all large towns.

For the mathematically minded there also comes from P.W.N. and Pergamon Press jointly a much more slender work of 70-odd pages by Oskar Lange himself. This is an English translation of a Polish work on Cybernetics of three yesrs ago, and is entitled *Wholes and Parts: a General Theory of System Behaviour*. The dust-jacket claims that this deals with "one of the key questions of dialectical materialism"—"that of the whole nature of dialectical processes of development"; and in the

[1] *Imperialismus Heute: Der Staatsmonopolistische Kapitalismus in Westdeutschland*, Dietz Verlag, 1965, 800 pp.

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concluding chapter (called 'The Dialectical Nature of Development') the author claims that he has shown how this can be explained "without resort to metaphysical constructions".

Farm Workers in Ghana

Some indication of progress in Ghana is provided by the recent collective agreement signed between the Ghana Trades Union Congress and the Ghana State Farms Corporation. Important extracts from this agreement have recently appeared in *Land and Labour*, the journal published by the Trade Union International of Agricultural, Forestry and Plantation Workers, the Trade Department of the World Federation of Trade Unions.

Among the different clauses one can note that all Ghanaian farm workers on State farms are entitled to annual leave of at least fourteen days. While on leave workers are granted luggage and transport facilities, including payment for transport on the basis of a penny per load per mile, which covers the employee, his wife, and up to eight children up to the age of 18, and to include the journey from the place of work to the worker's home-town or to any other place, whichever is nearer.

In addition, sick leave with pay is provided for, with full pay during sick leave up to one month, with two additional months with half pay for all workers who have worked for less than five years; three months full pay and three months at half pay for those who have served more than five years. Ninety days maternity leave at half pay is granted, with annual leave to be added to maternity leave. Leave with pay up to three days is granted for employees who have to attend conferences, etc. This includes trade union meetings.

Salaries and wages are based according to output, the lowest category in the general structure of 13 categories starting at £144 a year. There is also provision for increments and bonuses, not only to individual workers, but to units of farms as a whole, for inventiveness, creativeness, achievement of targets ahead of schedule in the most economic manner, outstanding performances at work, and introduction of new systems of work which help to eliminate waste and increase productivity. Bonuses are given to the best workers on each farm and the best farm in the State.

Under "Social Benefits", one reads: "All farm workers and their wives and children shall enjoy free medical and dental treatment. Where free medical treatment shall not be available, upon the receipt of a bill from a Registered Medical Practitioner, the Corporation shall refund all such expenses". The Corporation is also responsible for providing travel from the place of work to the nearest medical centre. First aid posts are to be established on each farm, providing free medical treatment for minor ailments.

There is also a Provident Fund scheme for permanent employees with the employers' contribution being more than twice that of the employee. This covers death, redundancy, incapacity, medical unfitness, resignation and retirement.

There are other provisions covering education, housing and training, etc.

Anyone who knows anything about the conditions of farm labourers under colonial conditions in Africa (or for that matter in any other colonial country), will appreciate the significance of the changes now taking place in Ghana. It can of course be argued that such conditions are not yet completely fulfilled, nor are they universal in Ghana; but the fact that they have been solemnly written into a Contract signed by a powerful body like the Ghana Trades Union Congress, is in itself an indication that a new wind is blowing through Ghana.

History of Apartheid

The study of *Apartheid* by the prominent South African trade unionist, Solly Sachs, has now been published by Collet's.[1]

This is not just an indictment of South African reaction and racialism, but a detailed study of "master and servant" relations from the importation of slaves in 1658.

He shows that, over the centuries, South African laws have aimed principally at dispossessing the Africans of their land and at securing cheap labour, that the vast profits made were never used for the improvement of African conditions, that progress in South Africa is not possible without ending racialism in every form.

Proletarian Novel in Britain

A number of very interesting studies of English literature are published in the *Journal of English and American Studies* published in the German Democratic Republic.[2]

The third issue of 1963 contains an article by John Mitchell on the *Development of the Proletarian-Revolutionary Novel in Nineteenth-Century Britain*. John Mitchell, incidentally, has been making a special study of the *Ragged Trousered Philanthropists* and has written about it in *Marxism Today*.

The problem that he poses is the gap in the field of popular and working-class literature between

[1] E. S. Sachs—*The Anatomy of Apartheid*, Collet's, 424 pp., 45s.

[2] *Zeitschrift für Anglistik und Americanistik*, published by the Deutscher Verlag der Wissenschaften, Berlin.

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lyrical poetry and imaginative prose in the nineteenth century:

> "The poetry of Ernest Jones, Massey, Linton Robert Brough, Francis Adams, Jim Connell, William Morris, Tom Maguire, etc. preserves and continues the best in the revolutionary-romantic tradition . . . the *novels* of Jones, Wheeler, Bramsbury and others, on the other hand, while making tremendously important historical contributions to the subject-matter of the novel, are, aesthetically, on an immeasurably lower level than the poetry (in the case of Jones written by the same man). . . ."

To further the discussion of this problem Mitchell makes a detailed examination of a novel of the Chartist period—*Sunshine and Shadows*—written by Thomas Martin Wheeler, a leading Chartist who in the years following 1848, when he was writing the book, was moving towards the left wing of the movement under the leadership of Ernest Jones. The novel appeared in *The Northern Star* in the 1848-50 period.

John Mitchell sees a part of the answer to the problem posed in the *political* stage of development of the British working-class movement. But another part, he believes, lies in the aesthetic approach to the novel. Novelists like Jones and Wheeler, he considers, wrote essentially not as novelists but as political publicists. He quotes Plekhanov:[1]

> "If instead of depicting character the writer makes use of logical arguments, or his characters are invented only to drive home an argument, then he is not an artist but a pamphleteer."

It was Tressell who, in his Preface to the *Ragged Trousered Philanthropists*, wrote that his book was "not a treatise or essay, but a novel", who, in Mitchell's view, opened a new period of the proletarian novel in Britain.

Berliner Ensemble in London

One of the most remarkable features of the last ten or fifteen years has been the revival of the theatre in Britain—including standards of acting, production, and writing, and although most of the contemporary plays may lack something in positive content, it is no longer possible to feel that they are unrelated to real life of our time, although the comment is often very wry.

It was thus possible to value the three-week visit of the Berliner Ensemble at something like its true worth. Here was a company operating with assurance, technique, integrity and enthusiasm that was staggering, in plays—all of Brecht—which were enthralling in themselves, and spot-on the real problems of our time. The debt of our own splendid Royal Shakespeare Company to the Berliners became clearer than ever; and it is by no means the only fruitful connection.

Brecht's comment on the system which he hated is always so devastating and so clear—in spite of the considerable mental effort needed to grasp it fully—that it is not surprising that our orthodox critics found him hard to take, and yet, as the three weeks went by, the various writings added up to something not so far short of a just appreciation of what was being presented to us.

The choice of plays was masterly. There had been a feeling that the Ensemble people were specialists in a particular style and method: but in these four plays they showed themselves equally at home in many. Arturo Ui, which describes the rise of Hitler in the persons of American gangsters fighting and murdering to corner the cauliflower market, dispenses in a sense with realistic human characteristics altogether. But the people in "Days of the Paris Commune" are every one rounded realistic human beings, including the fifteen or so deputies arguing out the rights and wrongs of applying terror against the reactionaries. Coriolanus and the Threepenny Opera made equally diverse demands on the actors, and equal mastery was achieved in all.

The plays, and the way in which this company deals with them, shows the way to the working out of one of Brecht's most profound sayings on art (quoted by Jiri Zuzanek in the July *World Marxist Review*):

> "There are many artists, and not the worst artists, who by no means want to work for an exclusive circle of 'connoisseurs', but who want to create for the people as a whole. This sounds democratic, but, to my mind, it is not quite democratic. It *is* democratic to make an exclusive circle of connoisseurs into a large circle of connoisseurs."

Our visitors have made a lasting impression on all who had contact with them. As a special correspondent of *The Times* wrote, in an account of a series of round table talks between the Ensemble and British theatre people, "these sessions . . . amount to one of the most persuasive advertisements for life on the other side yet to have appeared in the country."

Discussion Conference

Marx House announces a Discussion Conference, on Sunday, 31st October, 1965, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m., at Marx House, Clerkenwell Green, London, E.C.1.

The subject for discussion will be "The Dialogue on Marxism", and the opening speaker will be Eric Hobsbawm. As the accommodation is limited, anyone wishing to attend is asked to write to Marx House, enclosing 2s. 6d. (which covers a copy of the opening lecture), as soon as possible.

[1] Plekhanov—*Art and Social Life*, Lawrence & Wishart, 1953, p. 183.

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The Changing Pattern in Wages Structure

Bert Ramelson

WE are gradually becoming accustomed to the idea that we are living in times justifiably characterised as the second Industrial Revolution. The first Industrial Revolution had a profound effect on every aspect of life in this country. It shaped the superstructure of capitalist Britain. It laid the basis for the development of Imperialism—both the British variety and on a world scale.

But its most immediate and direct impact was on the proletariat, towards whose development as a class it gave tremendous impetus. The new methods and pace of production played a dominant part in determining working conditions, hours worked and the level and structure of wages. It also played no small part in fashioning trade union structure and the evolving of what has become accepted as traditional concepts of militant trade unionism.

What the two revolutions—nearly a century apart—have in common is that they both transformed out of all recognition the processes of production, making possible a manifold increase in productive capacity.

In some respects, however, the current Industrial Revolution is potentially much more profound than its predecessor of the 19th century. The first Industrial Revolution, having introduced mechanisation, made possible a big quantitative increase in each worker's output. But the output was, in the final analysis, determined by the application and effort of the operative.

The new and distinctive feature of the contemporary Industrial Revolution is the introduction of processes and equipment, the ultimate aim of which is the total elimination of human labour as production workers from the productive process. Man's role will become confined to servicing, maintaining and programming the unit of machines comprising the manufacturing process, and designing new or modifications of existing commodities and equipment to produce them.

Such developed processes are still the exception rather than the rule. Nevertheless, it is the coming trend, and must be the basis for any serious forward thinking on any aspect of our industrial future.

Such profound changes in the productive process are bound to bring about changes in all aspects of life. And as we are only at the start of this revolution, the observable changes are only the beginning of what are bound to become much deeper, and in many more spheres, as the revolution develops. It is also worth pointing out that as this revolution, unlike the 19th Century one, is not developing only in one country, but is world wide in its scope and hence stimulated by international competition, it will develop at an accelerated speed and will bring in its train faster changes in many aspects of life.

The purpose of this article is twofold.

First to examine what effect, if any, these changes in production methods are having on only one but vital aspect of the worker's life, the method whereby he is paid for his labour power—the wages structure. And secondly to examine if, consequent upon such changes, there is any need for changes in the traditional attitudes of militant workers towards methods of wage payment.

The Present Structure—How and Why it Developed

Even a cursory examination of the wages structure, as it has developed following the first Industrial Revolution, shows that while there is an infinite variety in methods of determining earnings, the outstanding feature common to most wage earners in the manufacturing and extracting industries is that the final take-home pay has some relationship to output.

Payment by results (PBR) in some form or other has been the rule wherever it has been at all possible to devise some scheme of relating the worker's effort to output. Time rates, whether based on an hourly, shift or weekly basis, are in the main confined to those jobs and services where it is not feasible or desirable (because of high skill involved in the job) to determine quantitatively the worker's output.

It would help us to understand why changes in this structure are taking place, if we examine why and how the present system developed.

Traditionally the militant worker was opposed to piece work or any other form of PBR whether based on the individual's output, on section or shop bonus. The class conscious worker wanted to realise the price of his labour power—i.e. a wage sufficient to maintain himself and his family at a standard of

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living to which he has become accustomed—in exchange for a given number of hours work (whatever the prevalent working week was—48 hours between the wars or approaching 40 now) regardless of the quantity or value of the product of his labour.

He of course had good reason for opposing PBR. PBR meant intensification of labour and fatigue, more proneness to accidents, condemning the slower than average worker to poverty, longer hours, or even losing his job altogether. It meant an increase in the rate of exploitation, and all in order to achieve no more than the value of his labour power.

If, then, PBR is nonetheless an important feature in our wages structure, it follows that it arose not because the workers wanted it so. On the contrary. This wages structure was imposed upon the working class by the employers because it was in their (the employers') interest. The employer is in business for one reason—to make profit. His ability to stay in business and the test of his efficiency as a producer in capitalist society is how near he gets to making the maximum profit possible.

As the devout of the past spent their lives in seeking the Holy Grail, so the capitalist spends his life seeking maximum profit. The source of profit is surplus value, i.e. the values produced by the worker over and above his own value (earnings). The more surplus value produced by the worker and appropriated by the employer, the greater the opportunities for making profit.

Given a certain quantity of fixed capital, the greater the output, the greater the proportion of surplus value retained by the employer as profit. This is so even where variable capital (wage costs) is constant for every unit of production regardless of output. Reduction in overhead costs per unit of production with the increase in output makes it so.

It is self evident, therefore, that the seeker after maximum profit is bent on increasing production. The greater the output the greater his profit, both absolutely and as a rate of return on capital invested.

Since the first Industrial Revolution there has been continouus development in the technique of production. Consistent advances have taken place both in the quantity and quality of machines used, as well as great increases in the capacity of existing machinery through more efficient arrangement, sequence and layout.

While all these advances undoubtedly played and play a big part in increasing output, it remained a feature of the advances in mechanisation that the full benefits of such changes were realisable only as a result of the skill and effort of the worker operating the machine or machines. Thus the final output and hence the total profit made by the employer depended upon the skill, the intensity of labour, and the co-operation of the worker.

Payment by Results

PBR as the built-in factor in our wages structure was the device conceived and implemented by the employers to achieve just this. The employers, over the years, combined ruthlessness and cunning to build up a wages structure designed to increase output per man hour on the basis of increased intensification of labour—and yet acceptable to the bulk of the workers.

The guiding line of the employers to achieve this happy state of affairs from their point of view—was to create over the years an unbridgeable gulf between earnings and wage rates. The wage rate (hourly, shift or weekly) in course of time began to assume a purely notional character. It was well below the value of labour power, impossible to live on, and it became more and more merely a figure for calculating earnings based on PBR and/or overtime.

The employers offered the utmost resistance to any upward change in the basic rate and relatively less to improvements in earnings. A low basic wage was vital to compel the worker to accept PBR as the main determinant of the price of his labour power. The outcome of this process has led to a state of affairs where it is not uncommon for earnings to be not far short of double the flat hourly or shift rate.

Where PBR was difficult to establish because of the nature of the work—there, in order to maintain the low basic wage, higher earnings were facilitated by the deliberate encouragement of overtime, working even where it wasn't strictly necessary. Anthony Barnbridge in a recent article in the *Sunday Observer* (Aug. 8/65) makes this point when he says:

> ". . . then there is the vice of overtime, widely used, not as a means to increase production, but as a device to getting a *decent wage*."

The employers' turning a blind eye to the common practice of "making overtime" in certain jobs is not due to their generosity, but their concern to maintain a low basic wage as the prerequisite for maintaining a wages structure based on PBR. Workers in manufacturing and mining could hardly be expected to tolerate low basic wages when they saw higher basic rates in other jobs and industries enabling workers to earn a "decent wage" without the intensification of labour and hazards entailed in piecework or bonus working.

Thus the technique of production developed since the first Industrial Revolution, *in which there were no qualitative changes until fairly recently*, led the employer, in his chase after maximum profit, to impose a wages structure designed to achieve maximum production based primarily on raising the intensity of labour.

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To achieve acceptance, albeit reluctant acceptance, by the workers of the intensification of labour—a wages structure based on PBR was devised creating conditions which gave the worker an incentive in producing maximum or rather increased production. Basic wage rates well below the value of labour power, and conditions of struggle which made it relatively easier to achieve higher increases in earnings than in the basic wage—these were the main methods used by the employers to build up such a wages structure.

But there was a price the employer had to pay too. Such a wages structure meant that the employers were compelled to share the results of increased productivity with the workers. A wages structure based on PBR has this additional built-in feature.

True, the employers get the lion's share from increased productivity, and this is so regardless of the cause for the rise in productivity—improved machinery, more efficient utilisation of machinery, speed up, or a combination of all these factors.

Nevertheless, in absolute terms, the worker receives something out of increased output per man hour. The struggle between unions and employers, or more often on the shop floor or colliery office, raged around the division of the result of increased productivity, the assumption being that the worker is entitled to some share of this increment. Increases in earnings, over and above the nationally negotiated increase in wage rates (known as "drift", against which the last report of NICY was so critical) are, of course, proof that this is how PBR works out in real life.

The employer resented having to share the increased productivity—even though it was the lesser share—with the worker. But he had no alternative. So long as the worker's co-operation, skill and effort was the main determinant of final output, he had to give the worker an incentive to increase output and, in doing so, was compelled to share the result of increased productivity with him.

Changing Wages Structure

The changes in the technique of production we are now beginning to see as a result of the second Industrial Revolution are precisely such as to enable the employers to find an alternative to sharing the benefits of increased productivity with the workers. Such an alternative is a wages structure no longer related to output.

The whole trend of modern technique is towards processes and equipment whereby the final output is less and less determined by the application, skill, and dexterity of the operative, and more and more by the nature of the equipment and its speed of operation, which is either predetermined or varied not by the worker in charge of the machine but by management.

This of course is, as yet, far from having become the dominant technique. But there are unmistakable signs that it will be in the not too distant future. In some industries, chemicals, oil refining and electric power—it is already becoming the dominant feature, and in a whole number of others, such as motors and mining, it is making considerable inroads.

Parallel with these trends in technological changes, qualitatively different from the hitherto continuous process of improved mechanisation, are visible trends of changes in the employers' attitude towards the wages structure. Motivated by the same drive for maximum profit, employers in those industries or sections of industries where the new technique predominates, now see the PBR wages structure, which till now was so useful to them in their quest for maximum profit, as a barrier.

The less production is dependent on the worker's effort and the more on the quality and speed of the machine, the more determined the employer will become to scrap PBR and replace it by flat wage rates.

The employers of course realise that they cannot ignore objective economic laws and that to attract and hold labour they must pay its value. Hence the trend is to reverse the old approach of wage rates being well below the value of labour power. What was hitherto an unbridgeable gulf—the gap between wage rates and earnings—is now presented as being easily bridged, with offers of flat wage rates for a normal working week equalling or even exceeding what was up to now earned as a result of piece work, bonuses, and/or overtime.

Overtime Barred

Overtime, like PBR, becomes a hindrance to maximum profit. The new equipment is highly capital-intensive, and to achieve "adequate" returns it is desirable to keep it operating 24 hours a day. This means 3 shift working, and such round the clock working and bags of regular overtime are incompatible.

The recent rationalisation of the Lancashire cotton industry was made conditional on the acceptance of 3 shift working and the overnight elimination of overtime.

On Feb. 22 1965 the *Times* published an interview by its Labour Correspondent with Sir George Pollock (at that time Director of the British Employers Confederation), who made it crystal clear that overtime as a regular feature in production and an important part of take-home pay is on the way out.

The *Financial Times* of March 23 1965 reported that the National Joint Advisory Council, after considering overtime figures produced by the Ministry of Labour, considered that one of the

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obstacles to cutting overtime was "the need for men to earn more money, namely, more than the low basic rates paid in some industries".

The employers have not lost their cunning. Just as when it suited them they presented PBR as a wages structure which benefited the workers, and only the militant minority saw through it and fought against it, so today they are presenting the "high flat rate" structure—the antithesis of PBR—as highly beneficial to the workers. They are also relying on the traditional aversion of militant workers to PBR to help them to get across this new approach.

The bait is the "high flat rate", fringe benefits, the abolition of overtime and the uncertainties associated with PBR. The catch is an agreement designed:

(a) to increase productivity and hence production, and

(b) to ensure that the *total* increased productivity is appropriated by the employer.

The former is achieved by workers giving up traditional practices designed to increase their security, e.g. restrictions on mobility of labour, interchangeability of jobs, etc., and the latter is achieved by the resulting increased production not reflecting itself in increased earnings.

The recent advocacy by the employers and the press of long term agreements is not unrelated to this end. The longer the agreement based on flat rates unrelated to production—the longer the period during which the full increases in productivity in the interim are appropriated by the employers.

Thus, under the new conditions, PBR becomes a hindrance to the attainment of maximum profits. Consequently the employers become anxious to do away with it. They seek to replace it by a flat rate unrelated to output, based on long term agreements and depriving the workers of many practices, laboriously achieved as a result of many years' struggle, to secure themselves against excessive redundancy and exploitation.

The New Approach

The Esso Fawley Agreement is of course the most famous agreement heralding this new approach. But it is not the only one by any means. Scores of agreements are being signed incorporating this new approach, away from PBR and towards a long term agreement based on a flat rate.

Because the new technique is as yet not completely developed and the production workers' effort still plays some role, though a considerably reduced one, in determining output, some of the agreements reflect this stage of development.

The Linwood (Pressed Steel's Scottish plant) scheme is a good example of the "half way" type of agreement. There the take-home pay is not yet a flat wage rate, but well on the way to becoming so. The flat wage rate became the basic component of earnings, with a production bonus *added* as a fillip constituting a small proportion of the total. Instead of an unbridgeable gap between wage rates and earnings the gap is considerably closed and the ground being prepared for its complete elimination.

It is clear from the above that as far as the employers are concerned, they have no compunctions about breaking with traditionally held positions. They are motivated by one force and only one—how to achieve maximum profit, how to increase the rate of exploitation as the basis for increasing the pool of surplus value and thus enlarging profits. And if to do that means discarding a wages structure which is ceasing to satisfy their needs, there will be no tears shed. Nor are the employers concerned about adopting an attitude the direct opposite of the one they held before.

What about the workers? There are signs that they are much slower in their appreciation of the effect of the changes that are taking place. There are indications that many militant workers are inhibited by past attitudes from examining objectively the impact which new methods of production are having on the method of wages payment as a yardstick of the rate of exploitation.

Having correctly fought in the past against all forms of PBR and for a decent hourly rate to enable the worker and his family to live on an acceptable living standard, without the sweat, hazards and insecurities associated with PBR—there's a resistance to shift from such attitudes, regardless whether the new conditions of production make such preoccupations any longer as relevant as before or even totally irrelevant.

A case in point is a recent article in *Comment* of July 10th.

In the course of describing the miracle of Bevercotes, the pilot automated pit in the Notts Coalfield, the author has this to say:

> ". . . For it isn't only a revolution in techniques that is involved. Bevercotes dramatically highlights the revolution taking place in the labour position in mining, including the breaking up *of the traditional wages pattern in the industry*. The old type of miner is giving way to a new type of skilled technician. The key men in the pit will no longer be the colliers at the face, but the craftsmen controlling, setting and maintaining the complicated machines and connected apparatus. *The division of workers into piece workers—the skilled collier—and lower paid day-wage men will be replaced by a uniform day-wage system.*
>
> *No one in his right mind, certainly no one who has any experience of the arduous nature of mining, would oppose such developments* (my emphasis, *B.R.*)

This expresses the views of many militant miners who for decades have fought for an end to the back breaking, hazard ridden insecurity and divisive character of the collier's contract and its replacement

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by a day wage unrelated to output. The real question is whether, in the light of present trends of changes in the technique of production, such an attitude continues to be in the workers' interests.

The Bevercotes project is worth examining for guidance. It is expected that output per man shift will rise initially more than five-fold. Once its teething troubles are over it is confidently expected that productivity will quickly increase by yet another 50%.

A day wage for everyone in the pit regardless of his job, unrelated to output, equivalent to double the highest earnings in the coalfield—would still mean that the miners' rate of exploitation $\left(\frac{S}{V}\right)$ measured as a ratio of the net values of total coal produced over total wages bill will have more than doubled. Furthermore, as productivity will increase so the rate of exploitation will rise.

Nor are the old arguments against relating wages to output as valid here. Safety in such new conditions of work is no longer dependent on the intensity of labour of the collier, the division of workers into different categories, as the above quotation points out, disappears.

Under such new conditions of work isn't it worth considering afresh our attitude to methods of wages payment?

Once production ceases to be, or at least becomes less, dependent upon the application of the worker, the whole case against relating remuneration to output, from the worker's point of view, crumbles. And the only way he can ensure a share in the fruits of increased productivity is by relating in some way or other his earnings to total output.

Our Attitude

The very fact that it is the employers who are now plugging the introduction of flat rates or day wages as the coming thing, ought to alert us to a re-examination of our thinking on the sort of wages structure that should be fought for in these new conditions. In doing so we should not be inhibited by the past. There is nothing wrong in changing attitudes if conditions change. The only consistency worth clinging to is consistency to the interests of our class. This may very well entail changes in form.

I conclude by expressing the point of view that the trend in changes of production taking place in the course of the Second Industrial Revolution is already showing changes in the pattern of our traditional wages structure. The old wages structure was imposed upon the working class through a combination of force and cunning to yield the employers maximum profit. There are signs that the employers are preparing to scrap the old structure based on PBR for a new one based on "high flat rates" to achieve the same end under new conditions.

The working class in the era of the Second Industrial Revolution is infinitely stronger organisationally and more experienced than it was in the formative years following the first Industrial Revolution. We ought to be better placed now to shape a wages structure in the coming years which will be more in the interest of the working class.

The first condition for achieving this is clarity of direction and unity in achieving an agreed aim.

I believe that in these new conditions it would serve our class interests best to shape a wages structure which would ensure the workers a continuous sharing in the fruits of increased productivity. This is essential not only for consistent improvement in real wages, but is also a contribution towards reducing the effects of periodic rises in unemployment inherent in capitalist society. For a basic cause of the classic cyclical crisis is the gap between the *rate of increases* in productivity and the *rate of increases in real wages*.

This means a wages structure which has as a component of the workers' wage a unit related to output.

The form it takes, the basis for its computation, may vary from industry to industry. It is more than likely that it will take the form of a collective bonus based on output and payable to all workers in the factory, pit or shed—as the distinctions between productive workers and non-productive workers will disappear. Such an approach would remove the basis for one of the strongest arguments against PBR—the divisions and disunity it brought in the past.

The purpose of this article is to stimulate discussion on this vital subject and as a result of discussion to achieve greater clarity and unity in approach before the trickle of new agreements becomes a flood and a new wages structure is jelled, when it may be too late to play a conscious part in shaping it.

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Where Does Literature End?

David Craig

"*Literature is news that stays news.*"—Ezra Pound

THE general disrespect for art, the feeling that it is queer and just a fancy trimming, has its good side in that it stops us taking for granted that art has some supreme, unquestionable right to attention, or that it can flourish in precious aloofness from daily life. Clearly art must be fed by the rest of reality and must feed back into it. The question is, how does this work? What sort of art is close to reality? If it is too close, does it lose its own nature? and what happens if it loses its roots in daily life?

I will start from a passage by Lu Hsun, one of the very finest writers of this century. As a Chinese, living in a backward country struggling to get a foot on the threshold of the modern world, he could see our age nakedly revealed, and his wit and sanity held firm in face of the worst that Japanese fascism and native tyranny could do to his homeland. In a talk on August 12th, 1931, he said:

> Revolutionary writing is being suppressed, and the magazines sponsored by those doing the suppressing contain no literature either. Do the oppressors really have no literature then? They have, but not here. It is contained in telegrams, decrees, news items, nationalist "literature", court sentences and the like. A few days ago, for instance, the *Shun Pao* carried a story of a woman who accused her husband of buggering her and beating her black and blue. The court replied that there was no law forbidding a husband to bugger his wife, and although she was bruised from her beating that did not count as a physical injury, so her charge could not be accepted. Now the man is suing his wife for making a "false charge". I know nothing of the law, but I have studied a little physiology. When the skin is black and blue, though the lungs, liver and kidneys are not necessarily impaired, physical injury is done to the place bruised. This is common enough in China today—nothing out of the ordinary—yet I think this gives us a better picture of society than the average novel or long poem.[1]

This is provocatively extreme, but I think it is mainly true. Great literature is not a sport, in the biologist's sense of a species that springs up freakishly apart from the main line of evolution. Literature evolves in society as do, say, houses, trades, and political parties. Hence literature has close relatives in non-imaginative writing, and by considering them, especially where they start to evolve into literature proper, we can grasp literature more fully, just as we can understand man better by considering apes and ape-men.

Time and Place

Consider that any piece of literature, however fantastic, has been made in a certain time and place. It may start from a situation and get little beyond it, like "Potatoes", a poem by James Thomson, a weaver near Edinburgh, written in 1796 (a good year for potatoes) on the subject of abundance and hoarding.[2] It may start from a situation, keep close to the facts of it, yet create from it images and types so striking that their interest is undying, as Dryden does with the disputed succession to the throne in his "Absalom and Achitophel" (1681) or Tressell with the poorly organised state of the house-painters in his *Ragged Trousered Philanthropists* (1914). It may re-create the situation as a 'myth' that leads out to the broadest aspects of human nature, as Shakespeare does with the divine right of kings in *Macbeth* and *King Lear* (1605, 1606). But in every case there is a kind of intermediate work, which has re-created the real situation through language—e.g. the pamphlets and primitive polemics of the 1640's, which were Dryden's forerunners[3]—but has not yet 'taken off' and become a work which can inspire people even when the situation has passed away. By looking at such work, or finding the traces of it in literature proper, we can see how the writer is related to society through the agency of those media which exist simply to do a job—the news report, speech, sermon, pamphlet, money-raising turn or song, and plain commercial pop of all sorts.

This approach is dialectical in that it treats forms as they change, as they come into being or turn into something else, and it is materialist in that it sees art as dealing, not with eternal essences or ideal forms of life, but with the life lived in particular conditions, as all life is. Two sets of examples will show the range of the two things, the changeability of literary forms and their particularity.

[1] "A Glance at Shanghai Literature": *Selected Works*, III (Peking, 1959, pp. 127-8).

[2] See Craig, *Scottish Literature and the Scottish People* (1961), p. 88.

[3] With Dryden's "The Medall" (1682) 11. 173-88, 248-301, compare polemics quoted in R. H. Tawney, *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism* (Pelican, 1938), p. 203, and in D. W. Petegorsky, *Left-wing Democracy in the English Civil War* (1940), 66 and n. 2, 67 n. 1.

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(1) Many of the best pieces of 'New Wave' drama borrow so freely from outside the theatre that they can hardly be called 'straight plays'. John Osborne is close to music-hall in *The Entertainer*. Scenes are numbered in lights at the proscenium side, like turns, and are introduced by corny patter from the comedian hero, Archie Rice, who is used both to project deflating humour at the expense of Britain's "Great Power" complex and also to act out his own crack-up as a person. In *Luther* Osborne makes Friar Tetzel, as he sells indulgences, talk direct to the theatre audience in the vein of a hard-selling salesman today: "There is something, and that something I have here with me now up here, letters, letters of indulgence . . . Look at them, all properly sealed, an indulgence in every envelope, and one of them can be yours today, now, before it's too late! . . . There isn't any one sin so big that one of these letters can't remit it."[4] The whole effect is to break the conventional pretence that the stage encloses a piece of real life on which the people in their seats are somehow eavesdropping, and by this means it comes home to us that 16th-century Germany was once real and alive, in its own place and time. In *The Caretaker* (Act II) Harold Pinter suggests that average talk is aimless by casting some dialogue as the patter of the radio or vaudeville comic—one can almost sense the sly sideways looks, the pauses, the appeals for laughter:

> My uncle's brother had a marvellous stop watch. Picked it up in Hong Kong. The day after they chucked him out of the Salvation Army . . . Had a funny habit of carrying his fiddle on his back. Like a papoose. I think there was a bit of the Red Indian in him. To be honest, I've never made out how he came to be my uncle's brother.[5]

In practice Pinter seems too heartless, too much the manipulator, to do more than exercise techniques for their own sakes. The point is that he is one of many playwrights today who finds as many fertile leads in the pop as in the classic forms. A whole scene of Wesker's *Chips with Everything* (scene 10) consists of a bunch of R.A.F. recruits, in perfect silence, pinching coal from a wired-up dump by some ingenious business with a pair of chairs, a pair of stools, and a pair of buckets. The effect owes much to circus clowning, yet the effect is to show people learning to combine and rebel. It also works with the unemotional exactness of a technical demonstration in a documentary, without declaiming, posturing, or explanation. Much of the action throughout the play is in fact drill or other straight military business. The effect is to remind us that this kind of workaday routine is more typical of human action than swopping epigrams over a tray of cocktails. Average and working life is as inherently dramatic as the introspective, self-analytic ways of a class more leisured and less close to production.

[4] John Osborne, *Luther* (1961), p. 49

[5] (Paperback, 1960), p. 57

Transforming the Straight Play

These examples don't altogether transform the straight play. This has been done recently in a series of works which yet strike one as keeping in the mainstream of realism, however unlifelike their style is on the surface. In Brendan Behan's *The Hostage*, the characters explicitly stop the action for a song from time to time, and the minor characters dance or run on and off like a revue chorus. Yet this is all the vehicle for a deeply-felt moral to the effect that violence can be self-defeating politically, that (in Brecht's words)

> Hatred, even of degradation,
> Distorts the features.
> Anger, even against injustice,
> Makes the voice harsh.

At the end the English private, held by the I.R.A. in Dublin against a hostage in Belfast, gets shot—by accident. The 'chorus' shrinks horrified back into the wings, a ghostly green spotlight falls on the dead soldier—who then gets up, walks down to the footlights, and sings straight to us:

> The bells of hell
> Go ting-a-ling-a-ling,
> For you but not for me.
> Oh death, where is thy sting-a-ling-a-ling?
> Or grave, thy victory?
> If you meet the undertaker
> Or the young man from the Pru,
> Get a pint with what's left over,
> Now I'll say goodbye to you.[6]

and the play ends with the whole company singing this in reprise. Behan has only taken a rough troops' song from the Great War (which itself had used a bit from *The Pilgrim's Progress*) and mixed in with it an advertising slogan and a drinker's cheerio. Yet one feels that nothing could have better summed up the play's wholehearted sanity. Death is not negated. But life prevails.

In *The Hostage* a kind of rackety good-humour loosens up the formal drama until it falls apart, and this is fitting precisely because the aim is to mock to pieces a muscle-bound political fanaticism. I have known an adjudicator in an amateur drama competition refuse to judge the company that did *The Hostage* on the grounds that the piece was "not a play". In the Joan Littlewood-Charles Chilton *Oh What a Lovely War*, story-line, sets, and characters are dropped altogether, in order not to distract us from facts so dire that they almost dramatise themselves—any fictional style would have boggled at the scale and manner of the Great War slaughter.

[6] (Paperback, 1962), pp. 108-9.

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So the facts themselves, e.g. mounting casualty figures, are screened at the back, while in front a troupe of pierrots represent the combatants. Fictional individuals with names would have been too puny to stand for the millions involved. Stylised characters can seem more representative. The clash between the clown's costume (which can be adapted with a few additions to look either British or French, officer or ranker) and the terrible happenings enables the producer to swing the audience freely from irony to hilarity to horror. And the comic style gives full scope to the punchy humour which the troops did in fact use so as to cope psychologically, in the most hellish conditions—

> Phosgene and mustard gas
> Are much too much for me . . .

The parodied hymn—

> Forward Joe Soap's Army,
> Marching without fear,
> With our own commander
> Safely in the rear . . .

The brilliant, and typically *popular*, trick of lampooning Haig's tactics (throwing unlimited forces into the attack) by seeing them as a child's game—

> The first staff officer jumped right over
> The second staff officer's back,
> The second staff officer jumped right over
> The third staff officer's back, etc.

I would say that such willingness to make free with the conventional forms is, and has constantly been, a condition not only of growth in the arts but of cultural health itself. It is a way of renewing and re-popularising the arts, which in class society are forever threatening to become bound by the culture (the language, styles, types, and assumptions) of the class in power. The challenge to this is often radical politically as well as in style. The Victorian 'well-made play' was made suddenly to look the old horse-hair furniture that it was in comparison with the "play of ideas" in the hands of the socialist Shaw. Since 1956 the drawing-room comedy, once so dominant that it could sink the poetry of T .S. Eliot to the level of an unfunny Frederick Lonsdale, has been pushed aside by all manner of vital experiments in the hands of such leftists as Behan, Wesker, Osborne, Arthur Miller, John Arden, and Shelagh Delaney.

This willingness to disrupt classic style is peculiarly popular in that it is always happening among performers who wouldn't count themselves as artists, who do it as they go along, for some social purpose. In an article here some years ago, A. L. Lloyd spoke of the *singing organisers* who gave American folk-song a new lease of life during the desperate, militant years of American trade-unionism between the wars.[7]

[7] A. L. Lloyd, "The Folk-song Revival": *Marxism Today*, June 1961, pp. 170-1.

A man like Joe Hill (actually pre-Great War) used his banjo and his talent for rhyming as a way of getting a crowd to gather at a corner, as a way of drowning out the Moody and Sankey hymns that were competing for the minds of American working men, and to give them something better to think about, in a form that comes naturally to everyone—the song. No doubt he broke off singing to speak his message, argue with a heckler, and then weld the meeting together again with a song whose humour was irresistible:

> Holy Rollers and Jumpers come out
> And they jump and they holler and shout,
> But when eating time comes round they say,
> You will eat on that glorious day . . .[8]

The Mixing of Forms

In short, the mixing of forms—from argument to comedy to song—is *natural* amidst the fluctuating rhythms of a crowd, whose pulse-beat the performer must both go with and control. (Hence, no doubt, the clown in tragedy, the sequence of conflicting movements in a symphony.)

Preaching shows this particularly well, for it was the forerunner of political agitation, the main inspirer in the days before the proletariat grew up. Consider this *strike sermon* from Loray, North Carolina, in 1929; the preacher was kneeling on an old store counter salvaged from the strikers' headquarters which had been broken up by the boss's thugs:

> I call to God to witness who has been the violent man in this strike. But we must bear it. Paul and Silas had to go through with it, and today they sit a-singing around the great white throne. In a few days you'll be a-singing through the streets of Loray with good wages. God's a poor man's God. Jesus Christ himself was born in an old ox-barn in Bethlehem. He was kicked about, speared about and finally nailed on a cross. And for what? For sin. It's sin that's causing this trouble. Sin of the rich man, the man who thinks he's rich . . .
>
> All the wealthy men in this here crowd hold up their hands. I'll hold up mine for one. My father owns this whole world. He owns every hill in this world and every tater in them hills.[9]

Every touch is lively. The colloquial idiom makes the legend from Palestine at home in the American farming country. Confident assertions mix with snap questions, direct give-and-take with the crowd, and unexpected wisecracks in the best American vein, the tradition of Mark Twain. Compare a sermon from western Texas, which modulates into a semi-chant:

[8] "The Preacher and the Slave": see *Songs of the Wobblies* (Labor Arts LP, Detroit), side 2, band 3.

[9] Sermon by H. J. Crabtree, quoted from E. J. Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels* (Manchester, 1959), p. 190.

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> O Lord, once more again, mm-hmm, I want to thank you, for lookin after me as I slumbered 'n' slept, mm-hmm, last night, and lifted me from my bed an set me on my feet this mornin, flashin the sunlight over this broad wide land 'n' walkin me out into it. But Lord, now I'm comin to you t'day talkin 'bout all your children down here. Somehow another sum done gone wrong. The aeroplanes is a-flyin' over the earth, a-droppin them big ole bombs down, mm-hmm, tearing up the good green earth that you put here, mm-hmm . . . Hush down the cannons from a-blowin' around earth. A-quiet the children's cryin in the mornin of the world, Lord. Bring laughter again into this here world. *Lord*, a long time ago you created just one world, mm-hmm. You created just one world and it's us that's divided it up, Lord . . .[10]

This must be heard to get it fully, but each "mm-hmm" represents a short pair of musical syllables, hummed on a note to which each sentence returns. It gives a light lilt, a buoyancy, suggesting a momentum that cannot be stopped. I do not know if it is a traditional style or not, but it certainly is a style, confident and natural, modulating from pleading to hortatory to lyrical.

The whole gamut, including comedy, can be heard in that elastic medium, the talking blues. The original seems to have started as a parody of the revivalist sermon, spoken rhythmically, dead-pan, to the jaunty picking of banjo or guitar:

> If you want to go to heaven let me tell you what to do,
> You gotta grease your feet in a little mutton stew,
> Slide out of the devil's hand
> And ooze over to the Promised Land.
> Take it easy, boy, but go greasy . . .

The performer can add verses about whatever he likes, whatever is topical—prohibition, a pit disaster, a union recruiting drive.[11] The form is just right in that it is entertaining enough to carry an audience along yet pointed and trenchant enough to heighten *morale* and consciousness. British culture seems to have been too stiffened up for some generations now to evolve any such flexible, in-between form; perhaps the nearest counterpart is the vernacular "patter" of the street singers, described by Mayhew, and still used by song-makers on Tyneside at the end of last century.[12]

Particularity

That kind of thing is not deep, or even very remarkable. It is just a natural enhancing of common experiences or beliefs to a point where they verge on art—the kind of thing any thriving culture should be able to give out plentifully. We have considered various things which hover between song and poetry, speech and chant, drama and show, reportage and the imaginary, the directly useful and the artistic. Very often this changeability of the forms is related to their particularity—their closeness to a certain time and place. Brecht's theatre style hovers between unemotional demonstration and drama that involves us more personally and this means that it can absorb straight facts where necessary, e.g. Helene Weigel's playing of Mother Courage when she hears her son Swiss-Cheese is dead:

> Her dropped jaw, mouth agape with head thrown back and eyes closed, shoulders shrugged and hands lying in the lap, is a purely physical posture that can be adopted without a trace of emotion—it is pure "showing" and said to have been copied from a newsreel photograph—but it gripped the mind of the spectator firmly enough for sympathy to be an inevitable outcome."[13]

This is indeed the true art of an age in which (to adapt Lu Hsun) a news-cameraman's photo, if he is a Capa or a McCullin, may "give us a better picture of society than the average novel or long poem". The fact is so intense that it projects itself as an art image, with little further stylising. In *Serjeant Musgrave's Dance*, when Attercliffe wants to stop his sergeant staging a kind of mock reign of terror in the north-country town, he leaves his Gatling gun and squats on the ground.[14] It is a sit-down, it is what hundreds of thousands of non-violent demonstrators have done all over the world. The political act hardly needs changing to become a stage device. When the Oxford Experimental Theatre Club applied the revue technique to the subject of hanging, in *Hang Down Your Head and Die*, a key moment was the piece of absolute inaction which lasted as long as the electric shock took to kill Julius Rosenberg. The crowning instance is the scene in *Oh What a Lovely War* in which the pierrots, with poilus' caps on, first refuse to advance to certain massacre, then do advance with the slogan "like lambs to the slaughter ", bleating like sheep, alternating the raucous bleats with lofty slogans—"*Pour la gloire* ", "*La France* "—until the staccato of the machine-guns drowns them out. On seeing or hearing this, one thinks: "What a devastating extreme of dramatic caricature." It turns out that it was *actually done*, by a French regiment at Craonne in May 1917.[15]

[10] Sermon of Old Cooper, transcribed from "Magnolia-ville, U.S.A.", a programme on Pacifica Radio.

[11] *Folk Blues*, ed. Jerry Silverman (New York, 1958), pp. 277-8; Jack Elliott on Collector JEA 5 (1961), side 2, band 2; Pete Seeger on *Hootenanny N.Y.C.* (Topic TOP 37, 1958), side 1, band 2; *Folk Blues*, p. 283.

[12] *Mayhew's London*, ed. Peter Quennell (Spring Books, n.d.), pp. 148-9; *Tommy Armstrong of Tyneside* (Topic LP 12T122, 1965), esp. "The Skeul Board Man".

[13] Ronald Gray, *Brecht* (1961), p. 100.

[14] John Arden, *Serjeant Musgrave's Dance* (paperback, 1960), p. 93.

[15] See Leon Wolff, *In Flanders Field* (paperback, 1961), p. 85.

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Clearly the direct resort to fact will always be only one of many realistic styles. But it has been so recurrent in the best post-war theatre that it seems to be typical of realism in its prime, when artists are confident of their stance in the world and determined to see things as they are.

(2) Particularity, however simple or rough, is an essential of art, for it is a sign that the artist wants his style to be a medium for experience of the world, not an end in itself or a mirror for Narcissus. You get it time after time in the people's songs [16]; perhaps the hallmark of them, whether industrial or country, recent or early, is the way they find what seems the authentic image for a feeling or situation. They make us say: "That's just it." The love-songs, for example, have no fear that a humdrum detail will let the wind out of a grand passion. The part of "The Butcher o Crieff" which Jeannie Robertson of Aberdeen sings as "My Plaidie's Awa" begins:

> There wis a bonny lassie
> And she wis gaun tae Crieff.
> She met in wi a butcher laddie
> And he wis sellin beef . . .

Naming the meat doesn't at all take away from the exhilaration that seems to blow through the song, with its melody that floats up high:

> O I canna say the wind blew
> My plaidie awa.[17]

In fact the homely actual detail intensifies the passion because it presents it as it is, in the conditions in which it has to be lived out. A Cumberland song, collected from a Workington miner in 1951, has this perfect detail for the collier's sweetheart who loses her lover to the recruiting sergeant:

> As I walked over the stubble field,
> Below it runs the seam.
> I thought of Jimmy hewin there
> But it was all a dream.
> He hewed the very coals we burn,
> And when the fire I'se leetin,
> To think the lumps was in his hands,
> It sets my heart to beatin.[18]

The nearer the song gets to the workaday and supposedly "unpoetic", the intenser is the feeling in the poetry; a complete image of a life, its routine and its inner emotions, has been created. And the style is the opposite of either romantic art-poem or pop song, which depend on whipping up a heady illusion of strong feeling in an atmosphere emptied of the circumstances in which we necessarily have our experiences.

The songs made by people for themselves constantly hit upon such detail because they express a way of life in which conditions bear down so hard or press so close that they must get in. A song collected in High Heworth, Co. Durham, in 1920:

> When I was young I used to sport and play,
> But now I'm married and the cradle's in the way . . .

A song got recently from an east coast barge skipper:

> When I was single I wore a black shawl.
> Now that I'm married I've nothing at all . . .

A song brought back by the Irish navvies from America in the railway age and collected since the war in Hellifield, Yorkshire, and Birkenhead:

> In Eighteen hundred and forty-one
> Me cord'roy breeches I put on,
> Me cord'roy breeches I put on
> To work upon the railway . . .[19]

Such details are so quick that one doesn't normally ponder them; but one can work out that what makes the corduroy breeches so 'right' an image is the quick shift from the date, a whole year, to the plain personal item. In a flash it gives us a whole generation of workers or the whole experience of signing on for a new job, just as some lines from "Muleskinners" epitomise the take-it-or-leave-it attitude with which the unskilled worker is given a job:

> Hey, little water-boy, won't you bring that water around?
> Hey, little water-boy, bring that water around.
> If you don't like your job, lay that water-bucket down.[20]

The bucket, the breeches, the shawl, the cradle, ordinary though they are, manage to become symbols. They seem, not single objects, but foci of whole areas of experience. That is one reason why folk-songs are so good at bringing to mind the life of generation after generation.

Comparison with art-poems

Comparison with art-poems makes this still clearer (of course there are things classic poetry can do that folksongs can't, but the reverse is true too and is more often played down). Between 1795 and 1805 or so, Wordsworth repeatedly wrote poems, in ballad style and blank verse, about hard cases—deserted village girls, destitute war veterans,

[16] Some of the following examples may not seem much on the printed page. They were all made up for singing and are mere skeletons without their tunes.

[17] *Jeannie Robertson* (Topic 10T52, 1959), side 1, band 3.

[18] "Jimmy's Enlisted, or The Recruited Collier": *Come All Ye Bold Miners*, ed. A. L. Lloyd (1952), p. 43; sung on *The Iron Muse* (Topic 12T86, 1963), side 1, band 3.

[19] *The Penguin Book of English Folk Songs*, ed. R. Vaughan Williams and A. L. Lloyd (1959), p. 102; *Still I Love Him* (Topic 10T50, 1958), side 2, band 4; *Shuttle and Cage* (Topic 10T13, n.d.), side 2, band 5.

[20] Jack Elliott, Collector JEA 5, side 1, band 1.

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shepherds whose sons had gone to the bad in town, and so on. It is an important body of work in that new vein of concern for the human condition which emerged in the Radical era. Unfortunately Wordsworth is forever watering down the effect, and letting an enfeebling piteousness creep in, by being too vague about the causes of the suffering. By 1800 or so his sufferers just are like that, crippled or deserted, for no given cause, as though the aim were almost to create an opening for surplus compassion. It has been noticed that the habit grew as Wordsworth became less inclined to admit injustice in the social system and even came to justify poverty as a stimulus to benevolence![21] With that compare the Cumberland song already quoted (a product of Wordsworth's own time and district), which glosses over neither the causes nor the pain of the distress, or the following song from Arkansas in the 1850s, which was sung by an actual vagrant, to get money:

> I lost my eyes in the blacksmith's shop
> In the year of fifty-six,
> While dusting out a T-planch
> Which was out of fix.
> It bounded from the tongs
> And there concealed my doom.
> I am a blind fiddler
> And far from my home.[22]

No conventional fear of the 'unpoetic' or 'inartistic' deters the singer from going into the technical details, just as no fear of naivety deters the Scottish singer from naming individuals in a pit disaster ballad collected at Markinch, Fife, in 1951:

> On the twenty-sixth of August, our fatal moss gave way.
> Although we tried our level best its course we could not stay.
> Ten precious lives there were at stake. "Who'll save them?" was the cry.
> "We'll bring them to the surface or along with them we'll die."
> There was Rattery, McDonald, Hynd and Paterson.
> Too well they knew the danger and the risk they had to run . . .[23]

The four men are named again in the last verse, and one feels there could scarcely be a more poignant elegaic touch than this literal, plodding repetition.

This down-to-earth quality, flinching from nothing, is the opposite of the usual art-poetry, of which two things can be said, that it tends to idealise, and that it is written by and for the middle and upper classes. (The exceptions to this are myriad, but at some point one has to generalise.) Euphemism, or poetic diction, is forever threatening to congeal the language of literature, and one of the worst types, the Augustan style that called fish "the finny tribe" and objected to Shakespeare mentioning lowly things like "knife" and "blanket" at a high moment in *Macbeth*, can be shown to have originated in the desire of the new middle class, after the Restoration in 1660, to gild the sources of their wealth.[24] Since the simultaneous rise of the novel and of the town reading-public, the middle class has been the dominant section of readers, and they are specially prone to shy away from life rendered as it is, having neither the unworried lordliness of the upper class nor the bluntness of the working man.[25]

The question is, how does class-position determine the idiom or style of art? Class-position itself varies according to people's relation to the means of production, whether they live only on the sale of their labour-power or partly on the surplus-value made by the work of others. There is great variety, of course, inside the class of wage-workers, but the majority tend to be close to production itself. The worker has to cope with the stubbornness of materials. He cannot escape into the less solid realm of words, concepts, figures, or any of the other *renderings* of reality, at one or more removes, in which the intellectual, the politician, and the business director, for example, spend much of their time. A cheque or a balance-sheet are, of course, realities too, of paper and ink, but they are *dependent* on the original productive activity, they are *secondary*. If the wheel will not turn or the edge not cut, it cannot be made to, the result cannot be got, by any merely logical device. As reality is material, the worker in materials is close to reality. Here is the source of the particularity, the "facty" quality, typical of the songs. This doesn't at all mean that a workman has only to open his mouth to utter a vernacular masterpiece. It does mean that there is a key quality of art—particularity—inherent or potential in work itself.

It is not only the facts about working processes and conditions that can be particularised; it is also class-position and the values that grow from it. Again and again a working-class singer uses the details of his trade, the simple naming of it, the

[21] See F. M. Todd, *Politics and the Poet* (1957), pp. 78, 89, 131, 148, 164, 173, etc.

[22] Pete Seeger, *American Industrial Ballads* (Folkways FH 5251, New York, n.d.), side 1, band 2.

[23] *Come All Ye Bold Miners*, p. 79; sung on *The Iron Muse*, side 1, band 6.

[24] This needs learned argument, but for a brief check see the line of writing from Dryden's "Annus Mirabilis" through Addison's *Spectator*, esp. No. 69, to such poems as James Thomson's immensely fashionable *The Seasons* (1726-30) and John Dyer's *The Fleece* (1757).

[25] The growing influence of bourgeois inhibition on literature is detailed in my Introduction to J. G. Lockhart, *Adam Blair* (Edinburgh, 1963), pp. xv-xxv.

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materials, the work-place, as a kind of declaration of where he stands, as in a recent Dundee jute-mill song:

> Ma mither died when I was young, ma feyther fell in France.
> I'd like tae been a teacher but I never got the chance.
> I'll soon be gettin married tae a lad they ca Tam Hill,
> And he is an iler intae Halley's Mill.[26]

A middle-class lyric (or a commercial one) would be quite different. The bourgeois would not demean himself to speak as though he could be summed up by where he worked or what he did, it would infringe too much on his individuality, whereas that song, by naming the work-place and the job, impressively suggests a solid hold on reality. This is common in the colliers' songs, where the marks of the trade are even flaunted to affront the genteel:

> The collier has a dochter,
> I vow she's wondrous pretty;
> The collier has a dochter,
> She's black but, O, she's witty!
> He shawed her gowd in gowpins [handfuls]
> But she answered him fu ready:
> "The lad I love works underground,
> The colour o my daddie."[27]

Dickens, the great adapter of popular styles, made precisely that clash between euphemism and particularity the hinge of one of his finest comic scenes —the interview between Dombey and Toodle in *Dombey and Son* (ch. 2). The wealthy business man is trying to find out if the labourer is decent enough for his wife to become little Dombey's wet-nurse:

> "Can you read?" asked Mr. Dombey.
> "Why, not partick'ler, sir."
> "Write?"
> "With chalk, sir?"
> "With anything?"
> "I could make shift to chalk a little bit, I think, if I was put to it," said Toodle, after some reflection . . .
> "Where have you worked all your life?"
> "Mostly underground, sir, till I got married. I come to the level then. I'm a-going on one of these here railroads when they comes into full play."

The advantage should have been all with Dombey. In fact Toodle has routed him—by the simplest factual replies regarding his own abilities and place of work. Satire and pure comedy blend here: the comic vision of Toodle, impelled by the mysterious power of marriage to pop up on to the surface, also makes of him a moral hero, too simple (in a good sense) to be overfaced by matters of status.

[26] *The Iron Muse*, side 2, band 7.

[27] "The Collier's Bonnie Lassie": *The Shuttle and Cage*, ed. Ewan MacColl (1954), p. 24. In the version printed for the reading public in 1724, the details of work were censored and euphemisms substituted: see Robert Chambers, *The Scottish Songs* (Edinburgh, 1829), p. 530-1 and *n.*

"Real Literature"

This example has taken us (no doubt to Honor Arundel's relief) from folk-song to 'real literature'. A remarkable number of the master writers for some generations past have excelled in a sheer cleaving to fact. Much of Tolstoy's method is simply to present life in full detail, so that, quite implicitly, the falsifying conventions and assumptions melt away. This is as true of his "pure" realism—e.g. *Anna Karénina*—as of his work with a vein of social criticism—*War and Peace*, *The Death of Iván Ilych*, *Resurrection*. In Gorky's great autobiographies we seem to be following not so much words as life itself—jagged, unexpected, motley, natural—fruitful and wasteful at once. They bring home to us the amazing range of life that covers the earth, and bring home (with a minimum of loading or pleading, with little but straight presentation) that it matters. People, we are made to feel, jolt against each other, injure or inspire each other, like *that*. Again, much of Tressell's *Ragged Trousered Philanthropists* seems at first 'unimaginative'—sober documentary; yet from this a most original and formidable irony arises:

> . . . when the workers arrived in the morning they wished it was breakfast-time. When they resumed work after breakfast they wished it was dinner-time. After dinner they wished it was one o'clock on Saturday.
> So they went on, day after day, year after year, wishing their time was over and, without realising it, really wishing they were dead.[28]

Each sentence by itself seems just matter-of-fact, yet taken together their effect is piercing, and so weighty that it is more than satire.

Even the great freaks of modern literature—Ezra Pound's *Cantos*, James Joyce's *Ulysses* and *Finnegan's Wake*—show the over-weening modern regard for facts turned to artistic ends. Altogether it is as though various modern essentials—science, the social survey, and the peculiarly wide-awake attitude of the town working-man—have come together to form what may be called the style of our culture. Most recently, Brecht has shown in a host of ways how far the playwright and producer can forsake illusion and yet still offer a rich dramatic experience. This large topic can only be mentioned here, but at least it can be summarised by Brecht himself, in his poem on how his wife, Helene Weigel, chose her props:

> Impossible to mistake
> The working woman's much-used bag
> Crammed with her son's leaflets
> For the one that is filled with the change
> Of the sharp-tempered follower of battles . . .
> Everything is chosen

[28] Ch. 7 (paperback, 1965, p. 92).

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According to age
Uses
And beauty
By knowing eyes and her
Net-making bread-baking
Soup-cooking hands
At home with reality.[29]

That last phrase has a special value for me because it coincides, very fittingly, with a sentence of Engels's that gives the heart of materialism. Discussing the worker's attitude to religion in 1844, he wrote: "Practically he lives for this world, and strives to make himself at home in it."[30] Here is the motto for man today.

The Sub-Rational

Anyone familiar with present fashions in cultural opinion will realise that the emphasis here on the factual and closely realistic is at odds with a great deal of what is now favoured. "Appearance and reality" (implying that it is hard to tell which is which), Yeats's theory of masks, "the unknowable", "the problem of identity", dreams, the absurd, the meaningless, the serious meaning of nonsense—is this not the predominant body of notions in the literary culture at present? It is right that we should admit how potent the sub-rational is, what havoc it can wreak in a personality or society, for ours is the only age in which a gang of psychopaths have geared a whole nation to their obsessions and so dragged the whole world into war. But attending to little *but* the sub-rational is like (in the above example) ignoring the decisive economic and political causes which, in Germany from the 1870s onwards, brought about the situation in which psychopaths could come to power.[31]

This cult of the sub-rational is always close at hand, threatening to twist our view of art. A revealing example is the section on the art of early man in a recent popular book on anthropology—edited, written, and produced in that stronghold of religion, the Federal Republic of Germany. The author, Schenk, is bent on exalting the sub-rational as the main creative part of man and on blurring the links between actual objects and the subject-matter of art. One caption to plates of drawings on bone from the Dordogne reads: "Representations of dreams, zone of the unreal". Yet the drawings seem plainly to be likenesses of people in animal masks and pelts doing totemistic dances, which very likely were the origin of mime, dance, and song, and therefore a key subject for art. Another caption says: "Representations of the imaginary and dreamlike". Yet the bone drawing looks very like a series of doodles of real objects—a bison's head, spine, and forelegs and some simplified human figures. We know that early man could draw animals with great skill but rarely troubled to draw people, or else produced something rough and sketchy. Schenk knows this, but cannot explain it. He can only rhapsodise—"Behind the ambience of late Palaeolithic men a thousand invisible forces acted in which a long departed past formed an indissoluble entity with the present and expected future", soon to be withered by "The cold overpowering of nature".[32] Yet sixty years ago Plekhanov was able to explain the excellence at art of hunting peoples and the feebleness at it of grain-growers, with a wealth of evidence from many cultures, in terms of the different skills each needed to *produce the means of life*.[33]

It is in keeping that Schenk should rejoice in the "wonderful symbols and abstractions" done by Cromagnon man—without being able to produce more than one possible abstraction amidst a wealth of primitive realism, and in the teeth of the proofs of Plekhanov, Ehrenreich, and others that "designs which have the appearance of geometrical figures are actually abbreviated or stylised representations of quite definite objects, mostly animals". The obscurantist bias of Schenk is plain; earlier he says that the discovery of the Old Stone Age cave paintings "shattered the overweening self-assurance of the people of our times", shut out as we are from the rich inner world by our "rational, logical line of thought in a technical-mechanical civilisation" (p. 135). This is very like the Bishop of Woolwich quoting Paul Tillich to the effect that for atheists life is bound to seem shallow, devoid of depths[34]—as though the material, especially the organic world, of which we are part, were not so rich that we can plumb it endlessly, with no need of supernatural fantasies to eke out the limitations of materiality.

This pointer to the obscurantist notions that hover round abstract art completes my argument. At present there is little sign that abstraction has begun to retreat out of its dead-end. The jet-black and plain-white "pictures" go on exciting the critics in London, New York, Venice—unless you think there is a sign of new life in the arbitrary novelties of the pop-art painters. In an essay called "Beyond Bond Street", suggested by a local amateur-art

[29] "Weigel's Props": Brecht, *Poems on the Theatre*, trans. John Berger and Anna Bostock (1961), p. 22.

[30] See Marx and Engels, *On Britain* (Moscow, 1953), pp. 158-9.

[31] This side-tracking onto the exclusively psychological explaining of social events can be seen in W. H. Auden's changing attitude to the European smash-up, from "A Summer Night, 1933" to "Spain, 1937" to "September 1, 1939".

[32] Gustav Schenk, *The History of Man* (1961), pp. 140-1, 154, 157.

[33] *Unaddressed Letters, etc.* (Moscow, 1957 ed.), pp. 136-46.

[34] John A. T. Robinson, *Honest to God* (1963), p. 22.

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exhibition, John Berger sets out the whole range of ideas that we need as a standard in our culture, where the highbrow and the pop have both run to such destructive extremes:

> Some enjoy the abstraction of stereotyped glamour: others the glamour of abstraction. You can daydream with pin-ups or—to use Malevich's phrase—you can daydream in "the desert of non-objective feeling".[35]

[35] John Berger, *Permanent Red* (1960), 57.

That last phrase is a key one, and applies as well to literature—e.g. Beckett's monotonous linguistic experiments—as to the abstract painters. I am not suggesting that the sort of work indicated by my stress on the vernacular, local, factual, and otherwise closely realistic is the *only* way out of the desert of non-objective feeling. But it does serve to show how literature is rooted in this world in which we strive to make ourselves at home.

An Educational Revolution?

Harry Fomison

IT is a commonplace that the world is changing more rapidly than at any previous period of history and that this is particularly obvious in the domain of applied science. Production is being revolutionised; but social institutions—forms of government, education, health, conditions of work and leisure, etc.—change far more slowly. Not only are there inertia and the difficulty of adjustment to new economic conditions to overcome, but there is the violent opposition of the class whose interest is to keep things as they are.

In the world of education at present there is turmoil over the expansion of higher education and over the form of secondary education. Before examining what is happening on these issues it will be rewarding to retrace their history under imperialism.

Under Imperialism?

Up to 1880 university education was exclusively the privilege of the aristocrat and plutocrat, but the imperialist expansion of the last decades of the nineteenth century led to the creation of an army of administrators, managers, professional and other "middle" men. Elementary instruction in the 3 R's (made compulsory by the Education Act of 1870) no longer sufficed these people either for their work or for their social position. "Red-brick" universities were established at Manchester (1880), Birmingham (1900), Liverpool (1903), Leeds (1904), Sheffield (1905), and Bristol (1909). In 1902 an Education Act established a national system of secondary schools: these rapidly gained ground till they catered for one-eighth of the child population at their age of entry and embarked on fierce competition with the older Grammar and Public Schools for university scholarships and entrance even to the highest professions.

By this means was set up the famous "educational ladder" which, it was proclaimed, would lead any child of ability to the highest flights of society. This was typical of capitalist ideology, for it set before the schools the ideal of unbridled competition and the individualistic scramble for "success"—usually measured in terms of wealth. It also had the advantage for the ruling class of drawing away some of the most able sons of the workers from their class and its struggles; for, with the emphasis on discipline and "character-training" and with the all-pervading smugly moral and religious atmosphere, the greatest care was taken that only those who conformed to the Establishment gained the prizes.

Effect of Two World Wars

Two World Wars, however, revealed great weaknesses in this system from a capitalist point of view and particularly in technical education. By 1914 the Germans had outstripped us in science and technique in many fields. The Fisher Act, passed in 1918 before the end of the first world war, raised the school-leaving age to 14 and envisaged the setting-up of large numbers of Junior Technical Schools and Day Continuation Schools. The defeat of German Imperialism restored the complacency of our capitalists and, although the Public Schools showed increasing interest in scientific and technical education, little was done to give such training to workers' children. The result was that in face of the emergency of 1940 the government had to improvise vast schemes of technical training both in the forces and in the factories. It was so seriously perturbed at the low level of mass education that early in 1941 it circulated proposals for raising the standard in its "secret" "green book" and one of the chief features of the Education Act which emerged in

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1944 from the three years' nation-wide welter of discussion was its emphasis on technical education.

Of course, it is not alone the advance in industry and technique and the needs of the capitalists for educated workers which have brought about improvements in the State system of education. The workers have continued from the nineteenth century the organisation of their own independent education as well as their demands for more and better State education. Their trade unions, political parties, Working-men's Institutes, the Fabian Society, the National Council of Labour Colleges, etc., have been active in diffusing, by speech, pamphlet and class, real education as well as political propaganda to considerable numbers. But it was especially the technical training of the second world war which aroused in far wider masses than ever before the consciousness of what education can mean and a passionate desire for more of it. The formation of the Council for Educational Advance in 1943 with the organised working class playing the most prominent part in it is one of the most significant events of our time.

After World War II

Once again, however, with the war-time emergency over, the bourgeoisie have been trying to stem the advance of working-class education. The 1944 Act promised to raise the school-leaving age to 15 and later to 16; the first step was taken, only after strong working-class pressure, in 1947; the second has still to be taken. Even Churchill paid lip-service to the slogan "Secondary education for all" (and "secondary education" before 1944 meant Grammar School education usually to the age of 16 and to School Certificate standard); but the tripartite system of grammar, technical and modern schools effectively barred the majority of working-class children from anything comparable to secondary education in its former sense. The "ladder" into the universities and professions was carefully restricted by continually raising the standard of entry. A few technical secondary schools were established, some grammar schools diversified with technical "streams" or "sides", some technical colleges expanded.

By the late 1950's the shortage of scientific and technological personnel in Britain was so glaring, especially in comparison with the wealth of such personnel being produced in the U.S.A., the U.S.S.R. and some other countries, that the Government was compelled to consider further measures. At the same time, the pioneer efforts of the L.C.C. in establishing Comprehensive Secondary Schools and the startling results obtained in a few Secondary Modern Schools which had instituted G.C.E. courses began to prove in practice what Marxists had long claimed in theory that full secondary education and even higher education were attainable by very much larger proportions of children than had previously enjoyed them and that restrictive selection at 11+ was unjustifiable.

Reforms Needed

So, on the one hand, new universities, Colleges of Advanced Technology and Teachers' Training Colleges are being established and old ones expanded and, in order to provide the requisite numbers of students, secondary education facilities are having to be extended; on the other, the working-class is more and more insistently demanding the fullest opportunities for every child. Hence, L.E.A. after L.E.A. is abolishing selection at 11+ and setting up comprehensive secondary schools offering a variety of courses. Already the results in the older schools of this type afford abundant justification: much higher proportions of pupils stay on to the age of 16, take G.C.E. at Ordinary Level and undertake advanced work than in areas where the tripartite system prevails.

Of course, the middle-class does not concede defeat on this issue without a struggle; parents of grammar-school pupils in Liverpool, Bristol, Sheffield and elsewhere have fought frantic rearguard actions to preserve their privileges; others may take up the struggle; but their cause is doomed. By the time the school-leaving age is raised to 16 the comprehensive schools will have demonstrated their superiority over the tripartite system and the change will accelerate.

The Public Schools, the citadels of upper-class privilege, may prove a tougher proposition: but sooner or later they, too, will be drawn into the State system.

To reduce the size of classes in all State schools to 30 or under and to train an adequate number of well-qualified teachers—to say nothing of establishing and staffing nursery schools for the under-5's and colleges of further education for the over-16's—will take probably 15 to 20 years.

When all these reforms have been carried out, when something like "equality of opportunity" exists, a very considerable advance in the country's education system will have been accomplished: but that does not mean that all the educational problems of the working-class will have been solved.

What Kind of Education?

What, for example, does "equality of opportunity" mean? Opportunity for what?—to become a "captain of industry", a designer of military aircraft, an ambassador for imperial interests, an archbishop? Is it not time we considered the *kind* of education we want as well as the amount?

Already significant changes are taking place in

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the quality of education. The recent publication of "Non-streaming in the Junior School" is important for indicating the development of "co-operation" instead of "competition" as the main motive in learning. Here and there progressive teachers—sometimes with the aid of Parents' Associations—have been able to modify teaching on religion, sex, history, etc., in a working-class direction. More and more schools are establishing useful relationships with the world outside—factories or farms, civic institutions, foreign countries and so on.

Such advances need encouraging; there are all too few of them as yet. It has to be remembered that teachers in general (even when of working-class origin) are carefully nurtured in the ideology of the ruling-class: the older Training Colleges (mostly run by religious bodies) with their monastic discipline were completely segregated from working-class influences; and even today, when many of them are integrated with universities in industrial centres and the "wind of change" is blowing through them, much of the old tradition persists. It is not surprising that only a small minority of teachers retain or acquire a working-class outlook.

Content of Education

So we find "Religious Instruction" still the one compulsory subject in all State schools and corporal punishment still widely practised. "Subjects" are divided arbitrarily and treated authoritatively so as to prevent creative dialectic thinking; history and geography are distorted to suit the outlook of imperialism; literature, art, music are presented in the Kantian idealistic manner divorced from their social roots and content; what arithmetic text-book ever questions the ethics of "profit" and "stocks and shares"? Even science is frequently taught in the most abstract and authoritarian manner; while economics, finance, social and trade union organisation, party politics, the realities of government, are sealed books to the vast majority of pupils.

Yet, in contradiction to the statements in these last two paragraphs, there is one feature of our education system which never fails to arouse amazement and envy in foreign teachers visiting these shores—including those from socialist countries—and that is the extraordinary freedom allowed to the individual teacher to teach what and how he pleases. Despite the blinkers clapped on him in training, despite the cramping limitations of examination syllabuses and text-books, despite the "advice" of directors and inspectors, despite the crushing weight of the mass media, the capitalist ideology of "enterprise" and "individualism" had dialectically caused many a teacher to experiment in matter and method and many a head-teacher to "liberalise" the school's approach to its function. Sometimes this has produced good results such as non-streaming noted above; sometimes it has produced extravagances such as some of the "activity" methods which are more reactionary than the old stereotypes they were intended to correct. But it has also led to the birth—after far too long a period of gestation—of scientific investigation into education. Like all other science, this can come to full fruition only under socialism but if pursued with vigour by sufficient educationists in their present freedom, it will play its part in the transformation of society.

This article touches only the fringe of the problem of the social content of education but when changes in the amount and organisation of education are producing qualitative changes it is timely for Marxists to examine the quality and try to understand and control the direction of change.

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The New System of Planning and Management in Czechoslovakia

Jozef Simona

IN recent years serious problems have arisen in the economic development of Czechoslovakia and other socialist countries. The nature of these shortcomings and the results of theoretical analyses clearly indicated the need for substantial changes in the existing system of planning and control, which has become inadequate to comply with present-day and future requirements of economic development.

The Old System

As far as Czechoslovakia is concerned the shortcomings of the old system can be defined as follows.

(a) Excessively centralised control of the economy no longer corresponds to the existing level of development of the forces of production and of interrelations in the field of production. Owing to the extremely large number of administrative instructions and of directive planning indices, national enterprises had not sufficient room for developing economically sound activities and initiative.

(b) Production and distribution are primarily controlled and measured by the volume attained. This system of evaluating economic performance is not fully consistent with the targets of planned economic growth. The direct assignment of tasks offers no possibility of rewarding progressive enterprises and penalising backward ones. A low level of economic performance has been accepted as an objective factor.

(c) This discord has been markedly manifested by difficulties encountered in the introduction of new scientific and technical achievements to the production process. The interest of enterprises in the fulfilment of quantitative indices prescribed by the plan is contrary to the public demand for products and services of continuously improving quality. Directive tasks set for technical development can cover only a few high-priority problems, but they cannot ensure the wide application of technical and scientific advances to the development of the forces of production. Consequently, the existing system has not created conditions favourable to the more rapid growth of productivity.

(d) Industrial and foreign trade organisations have not utilised the advantages of international division of labour for a higher efficiency of the national economy. The general trend towards the improvement of the *use function* of products has been only reluctantly followed by the manufacturing industries, so that exports have been reduced due to the low technical quality of products.

(e) Investment, the most important means of socialist extended reproduction, has not been handled in an economically efficient way. Investment quotas were allocated without the proper assessment of their future economic performance. There was a lack of economic pressure aiming at the more efficient use of existing capital investment.

(f) The adverse effect of the low interest taken by enterprises in economic efficiency was even aggravated by the lack of incentive to correlate individual efforts with the general aims of the national economy. Management was held responsible for production, but not for sales. The structure of production was not flexible enough to follow structural changes of the market. Consequently, without regard to market requirements, surplus stocks of some products existed side by side with shortages of other products in demand.

It is obvious that the shortcomings described are not inherent in the socialist economic system, but are caused rather by the insufficient comprehension and imperfect application of all objective advantages of this system.

The New System

The principles of the new system are aiming at the optimal correlation of the centrally stipulated proportions of the economic plan with value and market relations existing in a socialist economy. The new system also provides for the proper division of authority between government departments and management at all levels.

One of the basic characteristics of the new system is the abandonment of rigid, centralised planning, and its replacement by a flexible method of co-operation between the central planning authority and the industries concerned. Future economic development will be based on the correlation of the interest of society as a whole with that of national enterprises. Planning will still be considered as the

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basic means of directing the development of the national economy. However, it will be regarded as a continuous process of the correlation of claims on resources with the capacity of resources available, rather than a more or less arbitrary imposition of tasks.

In order to achieve the desired working of the economic plan, five planning stages will be introduced.

(i) *Long-term perspective* of economic growth for a period of 10-15 years. This will be a forecast based on an analysis of the state of the economy and trends of development during past years. It will contain the assessment of the possibilities of scientific and technical development with due regard to the position of the country in world economy, and particularly to her relations with socialist countries. The necessary structural changes in the national economy will also be defined.

(ii) *Long-term studies* will be concerned with individual important problems, e.g.,fuel and power, transportation, etc. These studies will be complete scientific forecasts for periods of up to 20 years.

(iii) *The five-year plan* will be based on the long-term perspective and long-term studies which will be elaborated here into concrete tasks and targets. The five-year plan will be a directive for the preparation of executive plans; it will be worked out in a continuous and permanent process of consultations between the central planning authority and the industries. Intermediate results will be examined and targets readjusted so as to make possible effective action to correct weaknesses in the economic structure.

(iv) *Executive plans* will be drawn up by the industries concerned for periods of 1-2 years and correlated within the five-year plan.

(v) *The annual budget* will be the last link in the planning system laying down all particulars in respect of financial policy, i.e. credits, rate of interest, allocations and donations, deductions from gross profits, etc.

An Integral Plan

All the five stages of planning represent an integral plan of economic development. Apart from the common method of their preparation all plans will be guided by the same basic principles. They will consistently follow the idea of intensive economic development. Investment policy will be directed towards the realisation of the necessary changes in economic structure. Most favourable conditions will be created for the application of scientific achievements. Manpower will be rationally used with due respect to regional conditions.

The new organisation and management of national enterprises (trusts, concerns, corporations, works) will be a very important new feature. Enterprises will enjoy a very high degree of independence. Production will be governed only by economic considerations. Salaries and wages will be in direct relation to economic results achieved. Gross profit (total income minus production cost) will be the only measure of economic performance. It will be used for the payment of taxes to public revenue and for obligatory contributions to various reserve funds. The balance left over after these payments will be used for the remuneration of employees as an addition to basic wages fixed by government tariffs. The direct participation of enterprises in foreign trade will be gradually extended and governed by the same strictly economic principles.

True, the new system cannot be regarded as a sovereign remedy for all the shortcomings. Nevertheless, it is a sound and rational approach to a complex problem; it will certainly create conditions and a climate favourable to intensive economic development; it will open the road to socialist enterprise, collective and individual initiative. It does not represent a single act of reorganisation, but rather a continuous process of rationalisation which in due course will lead to a continuous and sustained economic growth based on the industrial and cultural tradition of Czechoslovakia and her industrious people.

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Discussion contributions on:

Rudyard Kipling Re-Estimated

William Ash

IT must be stated at once that what Jack Dunman has attempted in his article in the August issue of *Marxism Today* is not a re-estimation of Rudyard Kipling, but a re-estimation of imperialism. Nowhere does Dunman suggest that Kipling was not a spokesman for British imperialism; therefore if Kipling can be described as a man who has "his place in the march of human progress", from whom "we have much to learn", then Dunman must believe that imperialism is such that its support is compatible with being progressive.

We *do* have much to learn from Kipling. An analysis of his work shows the corrupting and brutalising influence of an imperialist ideology and his popularity as a writer in this country shows how deeply that corruption has penetrated. But that is not what Dunman means. He is arguing that just as Dickens and Balzac can be regarded as progressive in spite of accepting capitalism and royalism, so Kipling can be described as progressive in spite of accepting, indeed applauding imperialism. But the Lukacs thesis, that an author can betray sentiments more progressive than the political views he advocates, which works well enough for Tolstoy and Balzac and can be stretched to include a good deal of Dickens, cannot be applied to Kipling at all. In the earlier period of capitalist development it was possible to be 'taken in' by the apologists of capitalism who maintained that for all its faults it represented a freeing of the human spirit in contrast with the feudalism it supplanted. But only the most wilful self-deception would enable anyone to argue that the last degenerate phase of capitalism, imperialism, represents anything but naked aggression for the purpose of massive exploitation.

Kipling As Progressive?

Let us look at Dunman's arguments for regarding Kipling as progressive though imperialist.

1. There is "his love of human beings which made real and sympathetic people even of the agents and tools of imperialism in his early years, and, as experience came, was extended to its victims". The first part of this contention hardly deserves comment. To show the agents of imperialism as fundamentally decent chaps is precisely what is meant by tarting up imperialism in order to solicit support for it. The second part of the argument, that the victims of imperialism might be decent chaps too, as illustrated by the short story in which a British soldier reflects that the Indian deserter they have just shot might have "a lass too" (and even a mother, no doubt) is, in the circumstances, merely nauseating sentimentality. Anyone familiar with Nazi culture knows that such sentimentality is inseparable from brutality, two sides of the same coin which is always recognisable fascist currency. L. B. Johnson himself shows the same 'sympathy for the victims of U.S. imperialism and is prepared to weep crocodile tears for the mothers and children killed in Vietnam because the wicked communists won't accept America's heroic shouldering of the white man's burden.

2. There is also Kipling's reverence for craftsmanship and his own great skill as a writer. But it is not craftsmanship which makes an author progressive, only the use he makes of it. Great skill goes into the preparation of the biochemical weapons which are part of the anti-insurrectionist armoury of the imperialist powers; we do not regard this as progressive science. (If the analogy seems far-fetched, remember the recent use by BBC Television of Kipling stories to poison the minds of the viewing public with another stiff dose of imperialist ideology.) The suggestion that Kipling's reputation as progressive is assured by Brecht's use of some of his techniques is like saying that any U.S. soldier who allows his rifle to fall into the hands of the guerrillas must be regarded as a freedom fighter.

3. Then there is his understanding of working class characters and his attempts to depict them faithfully—even down to recording the peculiarities of demotic speech. Here we touch on one of the most prevalent errors about progressive writing—that any work remotely concerned with the working class is *ipso facto* progressive. This is held to be the case even if workers are portrayed in a patronising manner or as thoroughly corrupted by imperialist ideas or as infected with the 'I'm all right Jack' attitudes characteristic of capitalist society. Books about the working class are only progressive if they show that class as at least potentially capable of making a revolution. The most stirring account of the union of white mine workers in South Africa striking because management had allowed Africans to do certain skilled jobs would find no place at all in the corpus of progressive literature.

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4. There is, furthermore, Dunman argues, Kipling's gradually coming around to a hatred and horror of war. The evidence for this is not very convincing, resting as it does on the assertion that when Kipling seems to be jingoistic he is really being ironic. But even if it were true, it would not make Kipling progressive. Such is imperialism's hatred and horror of insurrectionary war that it will go to any lengths to stamp it out. Many pacifists have such a horror of war that they underwrite nuclear blackmail and urge the victims of imperialist exploitation not to risk plunging the world into armed conflict by resisting aggression. There is nothing progressive about this sort of hatred of war.

Whitewashing Imperialism

No, this article will not do at all as a Marxist reappraisal. Kipling can be whitewashed only by whitewashing imperialism. It ignores the whole tenor of the years and years of journalistic endeavour Kipling put in on behalf of British imperialism at its worst. It fails to mention the offensive stereotypes of the 'perfidious Bengali', the corrupt and superstitious natives of India which Kipling devised to justify British rule and which are being used to this day to support the myth of racial superiority. This denigration of the Indian people is hardly compensated for by a few patronising references to loyal stooges like Gunga Din or fantastic holy men like the Tibetan lama. If *Marxism Today* is really interested in cultural re-assessments of the nature of British imperialism in India, there is a wealth of Indian literature on the subject all too little known in this country. It is the proper task of *Marxism Today* to help combat imperialist ideology in Britain, not to give currency to imperialist apologetics.

Albert Hill

AS a working-class Party member—I dare not call myself a Marxist—I am pleased to read Jack Dunman's reassessment of Rudyard Kipling and glad to know that I am in step with many of our Russian comrades in thinking that Kipling was one of our greatest writers.

Technically, i.e., "a teller of a rattling good yarn", Kipling, in my opinion, has never been surpassed. *Kim*, according to J. Masters, no mean writer of the Indian scene himself, is one of the best books ever to come out of India. Certainly to me, who spent a few years in that country as a "British Other Rank", the description of the characters and scenery are as vivid and real as any painting.

The charge that Kipling was an 'Arch Jingoist' should be examined as Marxists should examine—against its social background. At that period most of the working-class were pro-Jingoist, as witness the mass patriotic demos at the outbreak of the Boer War and World War I.

Kipling was big enough and man enough, like Bertrand Russell and J. B. Priestley who altered their views re the H bomb, to change his attitude to war. After the tragic loss of his son, killed on the Western Front, his poetry took on a bitter anti-war theme. Comrade Dunman quotes one of the better-known poems of this era—*A Legend of Truth*, but left out one of the shortest condemnations ever of the utter negativeness and futility of World War I—the two-line stanza "If any question why we died, tell them, because our fathers died."

Kipling didn't change all the way but as Marxists, creative thinkers, we should assess his positive side. What were his positive contributions to art? He had, as J. B. Priestley puts it, one of the first essentials of a writer—sympathy for people, brown or white. He had more, he gave his characters, unlike the "Angry Young Men" school of writers, dignity. This is probably why Kipling has "clicked" with the Russians, whose "greats" also had these feelings.

I would disagree with Orwell's opinion that Kipling was patronising to the soldier. The story *On Greenhow Hill* that Jack Dunman quotes is one of the most moving pieces of prose I have ever read and is anything but patronising.

It is streets ahead of the puerile, cynical, off-beat, twisted, pornographic stories that pass for the modern novel and anyone who can write with as much feeling and tenderness and dignity can't be all bad.

I am trying to crash in on the rat race of the *Writers World* and if I can reach one part of Rudyard Kipling's stature I'll be more than satisfied. One further point to finish off—Shakespeare was as reactionary as they come—he had no love for the mob—but who dare criticise him?

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Labour, What Next?

Jack Rosenberg

WE should commend Tim Webb for his reasoned contribution calling for an active initiative in the direction of left wing unity in place of our present rather passive attitude. My own view is that it is from the Labour Left that we can expect to see the greatest challenge emerge, and that it is one of the most significant and important sectors in the whole contemporary scene. As there appears to be such an under-estimate of this subject within our own ranks, I am supplementing his contribution with an attempt at an analysis of the character of the Left, and of what forces it is made up, so that an accurate assessment can be reached as to its future prospects.

In the original article William Wainwright draws attention to the two conflicting trends which have been an inherent part of the Labour Party since its early beginnings. The story has been one of a continuous sequence of clashes between them, uneven in scale and intensity, but never at any time completely absent. In the past, the Right wing, backed by the unfailing support of the block vote of the big Unions, always emerged victorious. In the course of these struggles, the Right has never hesitated to clamp down with all kinds of repressive measures, some of which have evolved into the bans and proscriptions we know so well. Every kind of pressure and intimidation has been utilised, including the free use of expulsion in order to maintain their own undisputed authority and the subjection of the Left.

Despite these great obstacles, honest and courageous Labour men have always appeared to carry forward the battle. The Popular Front campaign in the thirties which arose against the threat of Fascism, in which Stafford Cripps and Aneurin Bevan participated and were expelled, though later reinstated, represented a most serious challenge. In the same period D. N. Pritt was expelled although in his case, not reinstated. The post-war years, though on a lesser scale, still found men with sufficient integrity to make a stand for socialist policies, and likewise to meet with expulsion, as for example Platts-Mills and L. Solley, M.P.s in the '45 election. During the cold war period, the smear tactic of the "fellow traveller" label type was introduced.

It is hardly surprising, with such a history, that we have become conditioned to the idea that, however heroically it may fight, the Labour Left is always destined to defeat, and to a measure of political ineffectiveness and impotence.

Fortunately, even the Labour Party cannot escape the dialectical laws of change, and an objective examination of the present build-up of forces within it shows that this position is unlikely to continue for very much longer. We are approaching a decisive clash with consequences of a most far-reaching nature, which must in its turn have a profound effect on the whole political set-up.

Scarborough—High Water Mark

At present, the Scarborough Conference of 1960 remains the peak of achievement for the Left, and it is worth studying the nature of the struggle which took place. A contributory factor of major importance was the existence of the then newly-formed C.N.D. which grew so rapidly and provided a powerful re-inforcement, from a new angle, to the work already being done by the British Peace Committee. In some ways it was a shock defeat for the Right, which did not really believe it could ever happen and was somewhat unprepared.

As was correctly forecast by the Communist Party, the Right fought back desperately to retrieve the position the following year. To accomplish this, Gaitskell and his friends utilised to the full, and quite unscrupulously, the Party machine which remained in their control. Invaluable assistance was rendered also by Messrs. Crossman and Padley with their "Unite the Party" campaign, which quickly proved what a bogus smokescreen it was by being dropped as soon as it had achieved the maximum amount of confusion.

Thus on the surface things returned to normal, but in reality the Party is not, and never can be, the same again. The boost to the morale of the Left was tremendous, because although the victory was short-lived, what could be done once could be done again, perhaps the next time on a more permanent basis. Most important of all was the fact that the hitherto invincible Right wing was compelled to adopt a position of self-defence so that when they did turn the tables again, any suggestion of punitive measures, which have accompanied every other Right victory, was out of the question. Those elements which won at Scarborough have not been dispersed or disbanded in any way; on the contrary, at all levels, from M.P.s to rank and file members, they have remained at their positions and have never ceased actively and persistently working to extend their influence and enlarge their spheres of control.

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Composition of Left Forces

How is the Left made up? If we look first at Parliament, we have what might be termed the "Old Guard", and amongst them such figures as Sydney Silverman, Fenner Brockway and Emrys Hughes who have carried the banner of Socialism under the most difficult conditions. Last October's election, along with a Labour Government which is following Tory policy almost all along the line, produced also the biggest crop of new Left M.P.s yet seen at Westminster. Literally scores of them, many with C.N.D. associations, so that it is almost impossible to pick out names, but Anne Kerr, John Mendelson and Renée Short are already distinguishing themselves by their activities. A group of Communist M.P.s alongside would doubtless stimulate them even further, besides making a stand in their own right. But even so a new sense of vigour and purpose is being infused into the proceedings.

By itself the election of these M.P.s would have questionable value. The Parliamentary Labour Party is well known as being more to the right than the main body of the Party. Really it is an indication of the determined manner in which the rank and file are fighting in the constituency parties, one consequence being an insistence on Left candidates. All this adds up to a refreshing breeze of change blowing strongly at all levels. The fact that there is no one individual around whom a leadership cult could be created has its weaknesses, but also its advantages, eliminating the possibilities of being misled (with memories of Bevan's closing years).

It is necessary also to include an examination of the Trade Unions—it should not be forgotten that at the Annual Party Conference, it is the Unions' block vote which far outweighs that of the constituency parties. In fact the claim has frequently been made that it is the Unions which have prevented the Party turning Left long ago.

There have been substantial shifts in the balance of forces in the Trade Union world, although not so great as in the Party itself. But we should not forget that in 1960, as a necessary prelude to Scarborough, the same issues were fought and won a month earlier at the Douglas T.U.C. (I was one of the delegates). The battle continues to be fought Union by Union, the one big difference being that Communists can and do play a full part alongside their Left and progressive fellow members in the effort to win Left militant policies. Gone completely are the days when the automatic, almost servile, Right wing vote on all issues by the big Unions, could then be used as a big stick to beat or bludgeon any rebellious spirit in the Labour Party.

The biggest of the changes has taken place in the biggest Union, the Transport and General Workers Union, which on most occasions in recent years has cast its massive vote on Left issues—Clause 4, Unilaterialism, Missiles and against Incomes Policy, etc. Criticism has been levelled at Frank Cousins for his support on the ban on Communists holding office, without a realisation of the great care he must exercise to avoid becoming isolated, but any really Marxist objective assessment cannot fail to recognise the gigantic contribution he has made to the whole movement. The most concrete evidence of this is that the 1965 Conference of the T. & G.W.U., in which he played no active part, moved even more solidly leftwards.

The great pity is that whilst this was happening, other large and important Unions, formerly and for some years consistently Left in character, have been allowed to slip into Right wing leadership.

At the Trades Union Congress itself, a significant development has been the growing role of the technicians' unions, D.A.T.A., and A.S.S.E.T., out of all proportion to their size, and the leadership displayed on Left issues by their General Secretaries, George Doughty and Clive Jenkins. Any assessment of the line-up inside the Unions needs to be qualified by the way the real Left vote is obscured by the block vote system operated at the T.U.C.—the minority vote in each Union, which is often large, is not shown at all, and this has the effect of exaggerating the size of the winning side and minimising that of the losing side.

Effect of the Labour Government

During the years it functioned as the Opposition, the Labour Party could create and foster all kinds of ambiguous misconceptions concerning its own policies, most particularly after the accession of Harold Wilson to the leadership. None of this can apply now that it is the Government and must govern. More than anything else, the October election has clarified the issues and compelled a rapid stepping up of the struggle.

Criticism can be justifiably made, as it is, that in the months just prior to it, the Left virtually abdicated its position, and allowed the Right a free hand. However, this needs to be tempered by consideration of the very real dilemma in which it was placed by the blackmailing tactics of the Right, at a time when the longed-for Tory defeat was so imminent.

The same "don't rock the boat" tactics were again used after the Election, when as a result of the watered-down electoral campaign the new Government could secure only a razor edge majority. It seemed not unreasonable on the face of it to expect a closing of ranks against the Tories, not to put this tiny majority in danger. For a short time this had an inhibiting effect on the Left, but as the policy of the new Government began to unfold and be seen as

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reactionary in character almost all along the line, things began to change.

At first slowly, on the withholding of the pensions increase for the Old Age Pensioners until April, then gradually on a wide variety of issues. Defence costs, the M.L.F. betrayal, Housing and Rents, the Incomes Policy, etc. the voices of criticism and protest continued to grow in number and volume. Naturally, over the issue of the U.S. escalation of the Vietnam war the protests have reached their highest pitch, expressing the deep and widespread anger which is felt towards the abject servility of the Government in such dangerous circumstances.

How is it that within such a relatively short space of time the challenge to the Government should be building up within the ranks of its own Party? True, any illusions which existed before have been shattered by the performance of the Government itself, now seen to be basically little different from the Tory Government which preceded it. But the Attlee Government of 1945 was the same, in fact nearly all the actions of the Government are a dreary repetition of that time, including the American loan, an increase in Defence costs, and a wage restraint policy (not then called by any fancy names).

A ferment of discussion is going on which might almost be described as a battle of ideas, much of it confused from a Marxist point of view, but greater in volume than at any previous period, and it is this which forms the root of the growth of the Left and its resistance to the Government. All this arises from the growing depth of the crisis of British Imperialism which can no longer be solved by the old bankrupt methods. The strength of socialist ideas is such that it is becoming inconceivable that the Wilson Government can for long get away with the same type of programme which Attlee carried through with ease.

To underline this are two recent pointers—first a statement signed by 77 M.P.s calling for a 25% cut in Defence spending, with the reasons cogently set out, not just as an economic necessity, but to prevent the Government undermining its own future, and which includes the following:

> "The year 1951 was a passage of history which we do not want to see repeated. We issue this declaration as a plea to our Government not to tread the same path again."

The second is the Agenda for the 1965 Labour Party Conference, which contains 387 resolutions, the great majority of them criticising the Government's policies and outlining the type of socialist measures wanted by the rank and file along an extremely wide range of subjects, including Housing, Transport, Incomes Policy, Defence and Vietnam. This Conference, the first for 13 years with a Labour Government in power, holds every promise for providing a major clash, and cannot fail to be instructive as a demonstration of the line-up of forces.

Weaknesses of the Left

No examination of the Left would be complete without looking into its weaknesses; some of these are inherent in its own nature, whilst others arise from the restrictions and barriers placed upon it in the past.

First is a lack of cohesion and consistency inevitable in a body of opinion amorphous in its composition, not itself a Party, without an agreed programme, and whose forms of organisation are severely limited. Connected with this is the difference in level of understanding between sections as well as between individuals, so that commitment for a common purpose, with the necessary working class discipline needed to carry it out, is difficult to establish. We see, for example, how some erstwhile Leftists have succumbed to the flesh-pot attractions of Government office, perhaps the saddest spectacle being that of Anthony Greenwood, Colonial Secretary.

Many of the attitudes of mind have clearly emerged from past struggles, which we know has been a story of victimisation and intimidation and has left its mark. Perhaps nothing has been used to greater effect than the smear tactic "fellow traveller" accusation. From this, no doubt, we have the trait which Communists find so annoying, of discussing all kinds of issues and political actions without any reference to the Communist Party, much as though it did not exist or could not be seen. Subjective narrowness such as this needs to be overcome—but is there not a reverse problem? Of Communists not seeing the existence of the Left, or of underestimating its potentialities.

The qualities, the lack of which makes up the weaknesses of the Left, cohesion, discipline and sense of purpose, are qualities possessed by the Communist Party, which is itself an indication of what natural allies both are, and how much unity is in the interests of both.

Communists and Left Labour

Should this analysis be accepted as objectively correct, the main conclusion must be that with all its weaknesses, the forces of the Labour Left are building up and developing to a point at which they are compelled to make the greatest challenge to the Right that has yet been seen. The situation is one of a quantitative change ripening into a qualitative one.

The possibilities and implications arising from this need study if the correct policies are to be

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formulated. The fact that so little attention is being directed towards this subject needs changing. The reason for this is difficult to understand, since the *British Road to Socialism* makes quite clear that even in its most advanced and favourable conditions, our Party is not envisaged as going it alone, a Government of Communist and Labour Left being seen as the ultimate aim. Nor has Left unity ceased to be the general line—it is simply that it receives far more theoretical lip service than practical application.

One difficulty which does need to be honestly faced does arise from the electoral programme. The determination to effect a break-through on the electoral front is quite correctly at the centre of our activity. In British electoral conditions it is a colossal task, and of necessity leads to a considerable stepping up of the Party's own assertion of its image and identity. Preoccupation with such a task could understandably lead to an incorrect estimation of the Labour Party's development.

Would a greater emphasis on United Front activity necessarily have to inhibit the growth of the Party? Past experience of many Parties, including our own, demonstrates that growth and recruitment is speeded up at such a time. Workers respond to what they feel to be their true interest, and usually both Parties benefit. The need today is for a broader approach, so that whilst not diminishing in any way our electoral programme, efforts are made to find ways and means of united action with the Labour Left on as many issues as possible.

Working class unity can be achieved, step by step, only as a result of hard endeavour—and it will not come by passively waiting for it. Because the potential prizes in the shape of real working class advance are now so much greater than ever before, the effort must be made. Our basic approach to our potential allies should be based on a recognition that we are comrades-in-arms fighting the common enemy, the capitalist class, and its defenders, both Tory and Right wing Labour. Criticism should be constructive—and mutual—and not made from some superior know-it-all standpoint.

Sectarianism in all its manifestations needs to be studied so that it can be understood and condemned as the greatest of barriers to working class unity. The burning words of George Dimitrov need to be heard anew, by which he castigated it. "We want to eradicate from our ranks all self-satisfied sectarianism which above all blocks our road to the masses." [1]

Study could also be profitably made of the best and most advanced Unions, and of the best and most advanced Co-operative Societies, where it will be found that progress has been possible on the basis of a working unity forged in each organisation over a period of time by the Left elements and the Communists.

How are we to regard the *British Road to Socialism*? As some far distant Utopian dream with little relevance for today? Or as a blueprint of tomorrow's socialist Britain on which our present work and policies are fashioned and moulded?

Unity between the Communist Party and the Labour Left is seen as one of the essential prerequisite conditions for the winning of socialism. The time is now ripe to start creating that unity, the attainment of which will represent the first important step along the Road.

[1] 7th World Congress of the Communist International.

In Defence of Milton

Marian Ramelson

RAYMOND SOUTHALL'S article rightly reminds us that Bunyan and his *Pilgrim's Progress* is a living part of our heritage. In so doing, however, it seems to me that he wrongly places Milton in opposition to Bunyan, denying him his also rightful place in the culture of the people and thereby diminishes not only Milton's but Bunyan's stature.

Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* is not alone in being double-edged; so is Milton's *Paradise Lost*. They tell not only of the travails of gaining heavenly redemption, but with glowing affirmation uphold the cause of the English Revolution on earth.

But when one is considering the tap-roots of such works, it is essential to try and visualise the period and the people for whom they were written directly. Comrade Southall deals with one aspect of this in *Pilgrim's Progress*:

> ". . . the English countryside as this had been invested by popular imagination with real dangers and old superstitions partially translated into figures of Christian belief . . ."

but seems not to take into account sufficiently other and more important threads in the skein.

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The Bible

All the great peasant revolts and the first bourgeois revolution had the Bible as their great handbook of inspiration and justification. To tackle feudalism it was essential to tackle its heart, the Roman Catholic Church, which was not only the sole keeper of Christian theology and morals in the West, but also the largest feudal landowner with domains in every land as well as drawing colossal wealth from the sale of indulgences, Peter's Pence and national and international pilgrimages. To break this economic stranglehold, the Church's moral justification as being the one and only true church of Christ, the sole arbiter of faith and dispenser of God's truth was the first thing which had to be met and overcome. The original clash came in the fight for the right to translate the Bible into the mother tongue with the collateral right of all who could to read it. This fight was already relatively old when the English Revolution began, but as a result people were as familiar with Bible stories and characters, with biblical quotations and disputations on interpretation, as today's teenagers are with the latest Beatles record.

Therefore, when both Bunyan and Milton drew on the Bible for their masterpieces, they drew from a source book common and real to all.

Bunyan and Milton both fought for the Commonwealth. Bunyan in the Army, but Milton no less than he at his post as Latin Secretary to the Council of the Commonwealth. It was by deliberate choice that he remained at his post, though in so doing he knew he would become completely blind "ere half my days, in this dark world and wide". Both shared with every man who fought for the establishment of the Commonwealth the unshakeable belief that the English men so fighting were God's elect, his "new Hebrews", his chosen instrument to build up a society which would bring back to earth a second paradise. The winning of a place in heaven and of heaven on earth were inextricably interwoven in their minds.

As at all revolutionary times, the battle of ideas was at an immense height. The Agitators in the Army (the political Commissars of their day) argued, harangued and spoke to and with the men, reinforcing their points with quotations and illustrations from the Bible. In the main, these discussions were not about bread and meat, but about all the great intellectual, philosophical and moral problems which the Revolution had unleashed and the way to solve them.

It is this background that has to be understood as a whole, of the quickened impulses of tens of thousands in eager reading and discussion, whose legacy was not exhausted when Milton and Bunyan wrote. Both were speaking of things which were an everyday familiar to the men in "russet coats who knew for what they fought and loved what they knew".

Comrade Southall continues in the paragraph from which the above quotation is taken immediately with:

> "It is this characteristic of the work (i.e. real dangers and old superstitions inhabiting the countryside) which helps us to make an initial distinction between Christian's belief with its basis in folklore, and Christian belief."

This seems to me to be far too one-sided. In fact the poor man's and the rich man's Christianity have always been birds of a different feather. The poor draw inspiration from Christ because he too lived on earth a poor man, because he, who knew what they suffered, promised them that they would inherit the earth and enter the Kingdom of Heaven, and specifically denied these things to the rich, whereas the rich saw Christ in all His Majesty and Glory seated on the right of God the Father, in a Heaven that was a replica of earth only a damned sight better managed.

After the Restoration

Paradise Lost (first edition 1667: second 1674) and *Pilgrim's Progress* (1678) were both published after the Restoration of 1660, when Bunyan had already spent twelve years in prison and was drawing near his second imprisonment, and Milton had been persecuted (and saved only because of his great international reputation with the Protestants abroad and the unfailing courage of Andrew Marvell), and had lost most of his money and all of his sight. The everlasting glory of both men is that in face of persecution, with the tide of public opinion running against them, they stood fast and firm by the "Good Old Cause" and justified their stand in two of the greatest works of English literature.

Comrade Southall's key statements on Milton seem to be contained in the following:

> ". . . Milton's greatness is apparent; he fashioned the consciousness of polite society throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, at least as this is observed in the poetry of the time. . . . Both Milton and Bunyan were men of the Revolution, of course, but the rebellion in *Paradise Lost* is an abstract affair, universal perhaps but set in a distant past in a country far removed from England . . . Milton translates the struggles of the time into abstract disputes making the spirit of revolt 'safe'. Some intimation of the difference in spirit can be gathered from the 'Lost' in Milton's title and the 'Progress' in Bunyan's."

One is grateful that Comrade Southall thinks that Milton's greatness is apparent. From the list of charges against him which immediately follow he must indeed be great to sustain that title yet be guilty of all those crimes, and just to be sure that

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we have not missed any of them, they are later drawn together in the sentence:

> ". . . the pomp and circumstance of Milton's style, remote, abstract, grandiloquent, learned, abstruse . . ."

The Charges Against Milton

To take the charges against Milton one at a time:

(a) That he has fashioned the consciousness of polite society . . . as this is observed in the poetry of the time.

By polite society Comrade Southall clearly means the exploiters and their hacks.

I know of no evidence to support this contention. Personally, politically and poetically he has been constantly vilified and maligned by them right down the ages. He was a gay man, singing and playing musical instruments, he never used his daughters as secretaries, his marriages far different from the hideous caricature in Graves' *Wife to Mr. Milton*. He was a great scholar, a passionate republican, an unrepentant supporter of regicide and a pioneer on divorce laws, press and personal liberty and education. Everyone knows that polite society gives us an entirely opposite picture of Milton. It is the Royalist Dr. Samuel Johnson who derides Milton, but it is the republican and one of the greatest English critics of all times, William Hazlitt, who imperishably immortalises him.

What effect Milton had on polite society poetry I am not competent to judge, though I should think it strange if such towering genius with his immense contribution to our language could have been completely ignored, even by the Philistines. But he did have an immense effect on Keats, Shelley and Byron, hardly figures of the Establishment.

(b) The rebellion in *Paradise Lost* was an abstract affair.

If there is one outstanding quality in *Paradise Lost* it is its concreteness. If there is a more concrete, specific description of a war and its battles than that between God and Satan, and of Satan being hurled out of Heaven to Hell, I would like to know of it. It roars with reality and every soldier who had fought for the Commonwealth reading it would smell the powder and blood of past battles in his nostrils.

One of the most rounded, complex, developed characters of all literature is Milton's Satan, as real as any ever created by the imagination of genius. He is the body and soul of rebellion incarnate, whose determination cannot be quelled in face of eternal residence in Hell. Punished he is, yet he takes with him one-third of Heaven's population and not for him to lick his wounds and repine. He cries:

> ". . . Here at least
> We shall be free; th' Almighty hath not built
> Here for his envy, will not drive us hence;
> Here we may reign secure, and in my choice
> To reign is worth ambition, though in Hell:
> Better to reign in Hell, than serve in Heaven."

How many hidden supporters of the Commonwealth in the Hell of Restoration England must have identified themselves with this sentiment that so well reflected their innermost thoughts and hopes!

Surely it is more true to say that Milton creates living people who fight over matters of life and death for the revolution, just as Bunyan created living people with allegorical names that did precisely the same thing? In accusing Milton of "universality . . . abstraction, etc." Comrade Southall does not draw attention to the fact that Bunyan also discusses "abstract questions" and in so doing diminishes Bunyan's stature. The discussion between Christian and Apollon is indeed in concrete terms but it is nevertheless about an acute moral question. To whom does a man owe his allegiance, to him that has been set over him on earth or to the way prompted by his own conscience. Again the fight between Christian and Apollyon is the fight between man raised in rebellion and legalised authority . . . exactly the same concept as that embodied in the war between rebellious Satan and enthroned God.

(c) Milton makes the spirit of revolt "safe".

Where? Is Satan excused Hell? Are Adam and Eve repentant allowed to return to Paradise? On the contrary, and all are continuing the struggle when we leave them.

Of course Milton represented a different stream in the English Revolution from that of Bunyan, but all the streams which composed it, despite their different aims, were progressive and advanced when compared to their real opposites, Cavalier and Royalist reaction.

Finally, in my view, Comrade Southall reduces people's culture to a very rudimentary stream. In fact it embraces all the riches of the past. That people cannot yet enjoy these riches, indeed are hardly tasting the first course, is due to what they are denied in education and training. The ABC is important, but it is not the alphabet of culture, much less the language of it.

I agree in Bunyan's greatness. He not only wrote the people's language but he transcended its height to deal with immense problems and in so doing produced literature which takes its place amongst the finest ever produced in our land. But I claim for Milton his rightful place. He is the one truly great epic poet that England has produced. He stood all his life for progress against reaction. He wrote in imperishable verse and prose of his faith in man's ability to fulfil his destiny, to regain Paradise, and this is the stuff of the people and their culture.

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Necessity and Chance in Physics

Ken Geering

LIKE many other Marxists, Andrew Taylor believes that it is a betrayal of Marxism to accept the correctness of de Tocqueville's: "Chance does nothing that has not been prepared beforehand".

To Marxism, there is no such thing as "chance". Chance is either a supernaturalist concept or an expression of philosophical rule-of-thumb. No event or phenomenon comes into existence other than as the result of an interplay of, a totality of, antecedent events or phenomena—or, rather, *the* totality of antecedent events and phenomena. All that has so far taken place is part of "the necessities inherent in phenomena". That Man can afford to ignore the vast majority of these prior quantities and qualities is a measure of his ability to isolate sectors of reality and regard them as units of reality-contexts.

To distort this method of constantly refined approximation by accepting the anti-reason of "chance", as an explanation for, or a means of exorcising, or ignoring *relatively* random features is to surrender to idealism. We are dealing with comparative-irrelevances as far as our terms of reference are concerned—not "chance".

No Such Thing as Accident

No event will occur which runs counter to all previous mechanical and dialectical events. "Accident" does not exist. What is called an "accident" is an imponderable, a happening, subject to such a complex system of antecedent occurrences that our techniques and abilities for measurement of probability and our foresight are inadequate, or have not been brought to bear upon the event.

Statistical behaviour does not postulate an average over "accidents" but an average over to-all-intents-and-purposes accidents. "Statistics" is called in to predict events as a substitute for impracticable or impossible verification or investigations.

The fact that the behaviour of an electron cannot be accurately forecast ("yet"?) is not an excuse to speak again of "chance"—this is proved by the fact that no electron can behave in a way *contrary* to the evolution-of-matter properties of electrons, or in a way contrary to the total of prior occurrences of which the electron is a part, a postcursor. That "where an electron will strike" is not predictable does not mean that it is *un*predictable; only that present knowledge cannot predict it—and, because of the validity of statistical and dialectical knowledge, may never need to predict it. "Chance" is ruled out, again, by the fact that the electron hits where all the influences, internal and external, which were brought to bear upon it directed it—it could not hit elsewhere.

"Chance" then is relative chance, de facto chance—only.

To discuss an oak, as Andrew Taylor does, as though an oak is still an oak though it be stunted, deformed, or dead, and not a pine is merely to *reject* chance—for it *is* any of these things and *not* the other because of the *absence of chance*, because a definite history and pre-history produced an "evolved" result.

To say that an event is accidental *vis-à-vis* another event is true, for our purposes, but that each event impinged upon the other is a result of previous events.

Clearly, subsidiary factors, events, may fluctuate *within given limits* without affecting qualitatively the main factors, or, even, affecting them quantitatively as far as the required context is concerned. Yet, overall, the universe is still interconnected and at any time an *apparent* accident can supervene which *does* have an "effective" effect—upon the process as a whole, or upon the previously subordinate factors: and the two parallel units of existence occurred because of a series of "lead-ups", and clashed. Predictably, by any sufficiently comprehensive investigation.

Again, any outside observer is *ipso facto*, "subjective", not "objective", and must not expect a process to be conscious; but more of consciousness later.

Contingency

Andrew Taylor, late in his article, uses the word "contingent"—a far more useful and accurate word than "chance", implying, as it does, *subsidiary*, *relatively-irrelevant*, rather than "accidental", "occurring without reason". In his remarks about the gun, the subsidiary, extraneous factors assume a greater *scientific* importance if we remember that the whole history of gunnery, of tools, of Man, and of the universe, preceded the gun and its gunfire,

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and that weather, trajectory and wind interference are, similarly, the products of a history. (And gravity effects, by the way, alter, infinitesimally, all the time.)

Taylor believes that "if all causal connections were constant in time then every time . . . the same results would be obtained". Now, although the changes in the total of units-of-action would quite possibly be small the fact that a result had *been* obtained would itself be an addition to an unavoidable variation in causal connections—thus the process could never *be* repeated. The effect of the change could vary as little as the state of the Atlantic on the East Coast when a brick is dropped in on the West Coast, or as much as in a societal process when otherwise constant (how?) causal connections produced a new leader; but variation there would be.

Andrew Taylor, in presenting his gun analogy, says that "necessary features arise out of chance variations", that "necessity is manifested through chance" and that this is "a very neat example of the dialectic of necessity and chance". This assumes that "necessity" and chance are equal, philosophically viable concepts, in that each can form a part of a dialectical polarity. I believe that whatever other truths lie in Taylor's excellent article, this is not one. For the whole concept of "chance" is surely false? It is essential that it be replaced with a *scientific* concept ("relatively irrelevant contingents"?). Necessity and "chance" do not, I suggest, form an inseparable unity, because chance is a non-starter—it is not even at the races. Necessity, however, *is* a valid concept because it is the summation of connections expressed in probabilities or certainties. It contains no *truly* "random" ("idealistic") component. Only "our" subjective standpoint seems to invest it with (recalcitrant) apparent variables. (By "subjective" I do not mean that fundamentally objective criteria may not be employed by the external-subjective observer.)

Consciousness

What is the point of all this? It is this. My remarks do *not* lead back to crude mechanical materialism, mechanical determinism, they supplement statistical determinism, dialectical determinism, by reluctantly recognising the theoretical (for us) determinism of mechanical and dialectical processes, and they *then* take into account an entirely *new* phenomenon —*consciousness*.

The nearest approach to non-determined events is obtained by the intervention of, first, consciousness, and then the qualitatively different dialectical materialist consciousness.

I say "nearest approach" because even this contains—in a more and more "diffused", "diluted" way—cumulative determinism—for the dialectical materialist in his turn is a product of historical and evolutionary totality. He may deliberately stir his tea with a knife to defeat determinism but his having reached the stage of so doing is historically determined, in the *last* resort. As is his choice of knife and tea.

"Freedom", said Engels, "is the knowledge of necessity." Gradually, as tens, hundreds, millions of years pass, Man, and what Man becomes, will narrow determinism down—as in the approach to a total vacuum, or to 100 per cent pure water—until he is using determinism at will moulding its components, being himself ("the highest form of matter") the epitome of determinism—conscious determinism.

"True freedom" then is not concerned with "chance" at all; knowledge, measuring and statistical power, techniques, will constantly reduce the effects of apparent-relative-chance, until man is manipulating necessity. Because of the infinite and eternal ramificatory nature of the universe, of Man, and of knowledge, each new event adds a unit to the permutation. Total knowledge ("total boredom"), can never be reached. And so, our *Freedom* will grow, and the extraneous, arbitrary, power of Necessity will lessen. The title of Andrew Taylor's article then, might well have been "Necessity, Contingency, and Consciousness in Physics".

ANNOUNCEMENT

At the beginning of 1966, *Marxism Today* will be holding in London a week of Public Discussion which will include the following topics:

BRITAIN'S CRISES—moral, economic and political.

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The dates are January 3rd to January 9th, 1966.

The places, Mahatma Gandhi Hall and Caxton Hall, Westminster.

Full details will be announced in *Marxism Today* as soon as the arrangements with speakers etc. are completed.

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